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ABSTRACT

This pamphlet for high school and college students explains group action techniques for organizing responses to unfair educational or community policies. Focus is on problems of the urban and suburban school student. It is designed to help students overcome problems of inexperience which can hamper sincere group expression. Seven chapters discuss specific aspects of organizing. Chapter one discusses how and why to plan a strategy before beginning to organize. Thorough knowledge of the issues is stressed. Various tactics outlined in Chapter two include building a power base (leafleting), threatening the people in power (picketing), and appealing to the good will of people (petitioning). Chapters three and four suggest ways of organizing small groups and student unions; and define needed skills such as fundraising, mimeographing, power structure research, using media, contacting lawyers, and running meetings. Selection of issues through student polling is discussed in Chapter five, followed by examples of issues based on ageism and sexism in Chapter six. Repression, apathy, transience, and racial and class divisions are among the problems reviewed in Chapter seven. To illustrate certain points, examples are drawn from successful and nonsuccessful student experiences. The pamphlet concludes with an annotated bibliography of 22 related books and magazines. (AV)

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Student and Youth Organizing

by Jon Schaller & Mark Chesler
with Keith Hefner
Illustrations by Aaron McClellan

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Text by Jon Schaller & Mark Chesler, with Keith Hefner.
Cover and all other artwork by Aaron McClellan.

Jon Schaller founded **FPS**, and worked with Youth Liberation for several years between 1971 and 1976.
Mark Chesler is a professor at the University of Michigan, and works with Community Resources Ltd., a non-profit educational corporation which conducts and assists research and change programs in schools, public organizations, and communities.
Keith Hefner has worked with Youth Liberation since its inception in 1970.
Aaron McClellan is a student at Community High School in Ann Arbor, Michigan.

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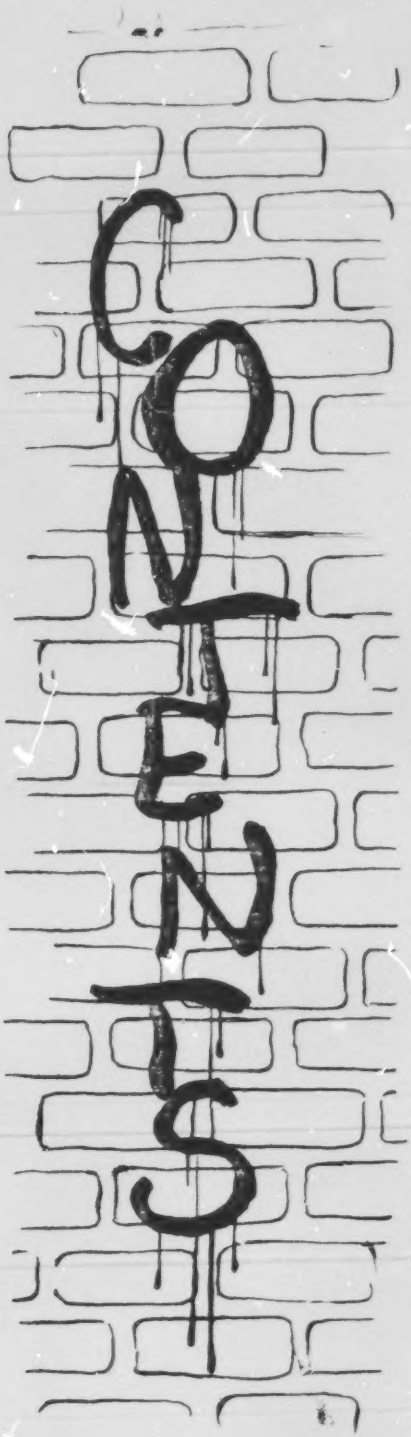

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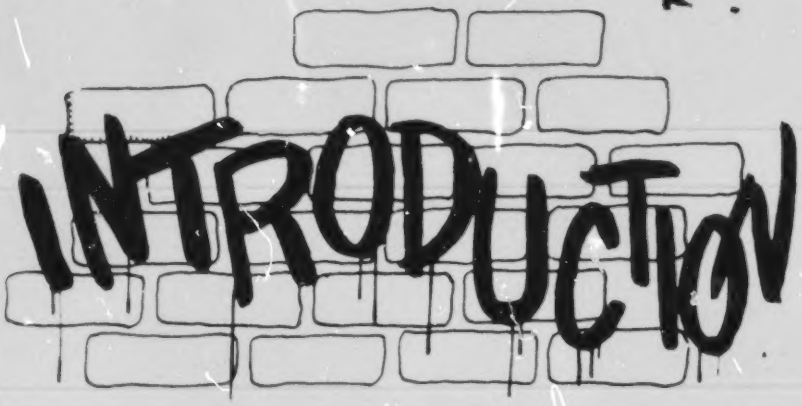


The only way young people will get their rights, and a significant voice in their schools and communities, will be through organizing. Despite the good intentions of some teachers, administrators and parents, adults by themselves will never give young people their full rights. Only determined, well organized and militant students and young people can radically change the system to their advantage.

However, as soon as you decide to do something about your situation, the effects of age discrimination become acute. As a young person, you are under the legal control of your parents, who may not want you fighting for your rights. Nor do you have access to money, printing equipment, and other resources that are so important for successful organizing. You probably don't have influence or connections "in high places." And most importantly, you don't have years of organizing experience. Young people are isolated from the real world; they seldom get to test themselves under real life conditions. Few students ever have the opportunity to set political goals, fight for them, experience setbacks, reassess, and fight some more. Therefore, not only do young organizers have to struggle around the issues, they also have to struggle against their own inexperience.

For example, by the time many student organizers learn how to recognize a runaround, how to form a coalition and how to plan a demonstration, they are ready to graduate.

Student and Youth Organizing is designed to help organizers overcome the problem of inexperience by distilling the experiences of other organizers. The pamphlet is divided into seven major chapters, each discussing a specific aspect of organizing. Chapter One discusses how and why to plan a strategy before beginning to organize. After a strategy has been adopted, you need to decide which tactics will be most effective. Chapter Two outlines some possibilities. Chapter Three talks about forming an organization, and Chapter Four describes many of the skills that an organizer must learn, such as fundraising, mimeographing, and running a meeting. Chapters Five and Six talk about deciding which issues to focus on, and list dozens of popular issues that students have used in past organizing drives. Finally, Chapter Seven warns of some common problems faced by organizers. At the end there is a short Bibliography for further reading.

This pamphlet emphasizes the *techniques* of organizing. An obvious limitation is

that it doesn't thoroughly analyze the *reasons why* young people need to fight for their rights. That question is discussed in other Youth Liberation pamphlets. In particular, we recommend *Unfair to Young People.* It shows how the schools got the way they are, based on historical evidence, which nicely complements the information in *Student and Youth Organizing.*

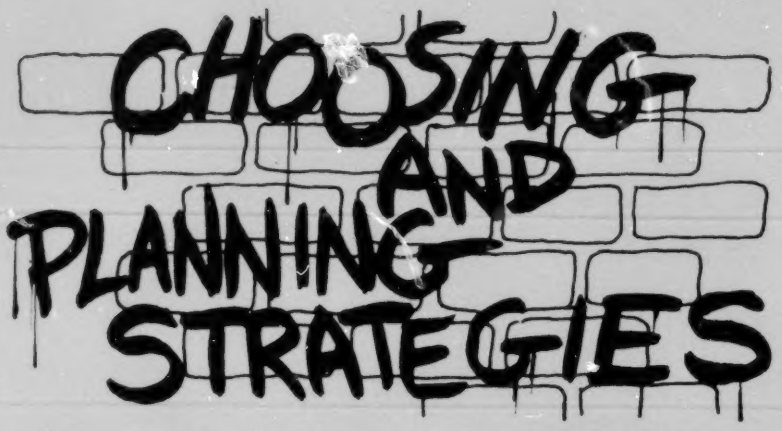
There are several approaches used throughout this pamphlet that need a note of explanation. First, to illustrate certain points, we often analyze and criticize an organizing effort. Obviously, we are not criticizing those students for their mistakes. Mistakes are inevitable in organizing; the only way to avoid them is to do nothing.

Second, we often say that organizers "should" do this or "must" do that. Though the information and suggestions in this pamphlet are sound, you needn't do something a certain way just because it says so in here, especially if your own instincts or experiences suggest that you should proceed differently. *Student and Youth Organizing* is only a guide to the complex task of organizing, not the last word.

Not all students will find this pamphlet useful or helpful. Although schools are similar throughout the country, they are not all the same, and not all students want the same things. For example, students in a public free school might find much of the information presented here irrelevant, at least to their immediate school situation. Students who generally expect adults to change things for students' benefit will not find much to help them here. Nor is this guide intended for students who want to cut off all communication with adults. We believe that student/adult coalitions are often advantageous.

This pamphlet emphasizes urban and suburban schools; students in rural areas may face different problems. Likewise, our experience and emphasis is primarily in the northern United States. Southern students, and Canadians, may have to do some translation.

Students who want to stress racism or sexism, rather than ageism, as the primary issue, will find this pamphlet useful in conjunction with their other materials. We think these other issues are complementary, and that the information presented here can be used productively by any group struggling to make schools better serve the needs of students and the community.



Despite the 1969 *Tinker* decision in which the Supreme Court said that high school students should have freedom of speech, a great number of schools still put illegal or questionable limitations on student activities. In 1971, a group of students in central Minnesota decided to do something about it.

Their school required that anyone passing out literature on campus had to get a faculty sponsor and prior approval from the dean. The dean, as a couple of students discovered when they approached him about a leaflet supporting the United Farmworkers boycott, would not approve anything controversial.

The students got together with some disgruntled writers from the school newspaper staff. After looking at several books and pamphlets on student rights, they decided that they should have the right to distribute whatever they wished, with no sponsor and with no prior approval. They made plans to get the school policy abolished.

Dennis, who had taken a lot of initiative on such things in the past, made an appointment for several members of the group to talk with the principal. Three days later they walked into the office for the meeting.

A Hard-Fought Failure

"We want to talk to you about abolishing the school's literature distribution policy," said Dennis. "We think it's unconstitutional because it requires prior censorship." He reached into his notebook and pulled out a copy of the *Tinker* decision, a xeroxed page from a book in the school library that described prior censorship and told why the courts have ruled it unconstitutional, and a letter from the American Civil Liberties Union, saying that they believed the school's policy would not stand up in court.

The principal looked everything over. "I'm certainly pleased that you young people are taking an interest in school affairs," he said, "though I must say this doesn't seem like an important enough issue to spend all of your time on it. Why not let me look over this material and we'll talk about it on. . . ." he looked at his calender, "two weeks from today, good enough?"

It wasn't, but there didn't seem to be any choice so the three students

nodded OK and left.

Two weeks later, they came back. "Oh my goodness," exclaimed the principal, clapping his hand to his forehead, when they walked in, "I owe you an apology. Somehow I lost the materials you left me before I had a chance to look them over. I certainly hate to do this, but I think we had better postpone the meeting and if you'll get me copies, I'll be sure to look them over."

Again, they didn't like it, but the students didn't feel they had much choice. This time, it was three weeks before they met with the principal again.

"Well, good afternoon," he said when they showed up on time for their third appointment. "I believe you are here to discuss our literature distribution policy?"

"That's right."

"To tell you the truth kids, I took one look at that material you gave me and I said to myself, 'Why this is a matter for the school board to decide, not for me', I think you may be right, actually, but it's not my decision. I recommend that you talk to the school board about it."

"How do we do that?"

"Check with my secretary. She'll give you the phone number for the school board clerk. Call the clerk and make arrangements."

"We'll try that. Thanks."

"And thank you," said the principal as he closed the door after them. "It's certainly been a pleasure working with responsible students like yourselves."

Calling the clerk, Dennis found that the agenda was full for the coming meeting, but that the matter could be put on the agenda for the next meeting, which was one month away. He scheduled five minutes for a "citizen presentation" where the students could present their case.

The meeting finally came. Dennis and three others in the group went in and sat down together. When their five minutes came, Dennis stood up and read from the various documents he had shown the principal. He concluded by saying that "in view of all of this, it seems clear that the school's present policy is unconstitutional and should be abolished."

"We thank you for your concern," said the board president. He turned to a middleaged man at the end of the table. "As the board's lawyer, do you have anything to say about this?" Bartholemew replied, "Yes I do. The issue is a very complex one, and reading from just one or two sources does not really do it justice. Quite briefly, however, I think you will find that many schools have policies like ours. State law gives the board the authority to regulate school affairs, and this is certainly a school affair."

Dennis waved his hand wildly to protest. "There will be no discussion on this unless an actual proposal is on the floor," said the board president. "Do any board members wish to make a motion to change the policy."

No one moved a finger. Discussion was over, concluded the board president, and he moved on the next agenda item: opening the school

gym on Saturdays for recreational basketball.

Dennis and his three friends left the meeting fuming. They had wasted three months waiting for the principal, and then the school board, to take some kind of action. And now . . . they were exactly where they started. Maybe even a little worse off.

They had been screwed. First by a principal who simply wanted to stall and avoid having to do anything; then by a school board, which even though it might be wrong legally, knew the students didn't have the resources to take it to court. But the board wasn't the only obstacle. Dennis and his friends had blown it. Their strategy was poor. As a matter of fact, they didn't even have much of a conscious strategy. They had started talking to the principal, simply because that was the first thing that occurred to them. Then they tried to talk to the school board because that was what the principal had said to do. They never sat down, listed the options open to them, and then decided which tactic or set of tactics would be most effective.

Another mistake: everything was done by Dennis. He made the appointments to talk to the principal and school board, he chased down the references and letters, he did the talking on those occasions, he did whatever planning took place, and the others let him. If everyone had been working on different approaches to the same problem, then when the school board failed to act, it wouldn't have been the end of everything. And the other students would have felt like something more than the shadow of Dennis.

Planning Your Strategy

How could these four students have been more effective? Planning a strategy for change always involves guesswork, and you can never be sure what will work and what won't. But there are several steps you can take to improve your chances of success.

First, *make sure you know the issues well*, including the arguments and tactics that may be used against you. This requires homework, talking to others with different experience, and anticipating your objectives.

Second, *get your supporters together*, through leaflets and posters, a newspaper article or just word of mouth. Assemble a lot of people who support whatever change you're working for. Then, before interest dies down, get everyone together for a meeting.

At that meeting, list the forces working for and against you. For the Minnesota students discussed above, that list might have looked like the following:

Forces On Our Side

- Supreme Court
- Barbara's mother is a lawyer and would support us, though maybe she wouldn't take our case to court.
- Bill of Rights is taught in civics class, we can tie in with that.

Forces Against Us

- Entire administration is conservative, not likely to want change.
- We have no money for court.
- Most students don't feel affected by this issue.

Once that list is in front of you, you'll already have some ideas for the third step: *brainstorm about tactics you could use.* Brainstorming, remember, means that everyone just throws out ideas as fast as they can think of them. You don't comment on the ideas at this point. Try to be creative. One person should act as the recorder, writing everything down. In the case of the Minnesota students, the list may have looked like this:

- Circulate petitions among students, asking for change in policy
- Approach the school board
- Ask the ACLU for advice on what to do
- Kidnap the principal and demand as ransom that the rule be changed
- Ignore the rule completely
- Get some sympathetic teachers to talk with the administration
- Type up the Supreme Court's decision on a leaflet, pass it out, and defy the school to prevent it
- Ask Barbara's mother for advice
- Whenever the Bill of Rights is dicusssed in civics, ask why we don't have those rights in school
- Start collecting a list of names of kids who support us so that we will be able to mobilize them for a demonstration or a school board meeting
- We don't do anything about this issue — we find some other issue that a lot more students are concerned about, organize successfully against it, and then use the momentum from that to work on the literature policy and other things
- Threaten to quit coming to school if we don't get our rights

When that list is as long as you can get it, then it's time to evaluate each idea. Some suggestions you will quickly discard, and others you may decide make sense only if done simultaneously with other tactics.

Certain questions can help you determine whether each question is usable or not:

☐ Do most people involved feel that the goal in this particular case justifies the means? Many students would be willing to break a school rule for a cause they felt was important, but not for something that seemed trivial.

☐ What is the risk involved? Are you willing to take that risk? Risks involved can include:

- Getting in trouble with parents
- Getting detentions, or being suspended, expelled or arrested
- Losing a part-time job
- Harrassment from teachers and administrators

Remember, the more students that support the action, the less chance there is of harsh repression.

☐ Is this tactic likely to be effective? Some tactics (petitioning) need to be combined with other approaches if they are to be fully effective. Other approaches (suing the school) might succeed by themselves.

☐ What effect will this tactic have on later organizing? Will it help you build a broad base of students, or will it alienate them? Will it create opposition to your group among teachers and community people who

Newspaper staff misses chance to unite students

In early December the staff of **Yenta**, an independent student paper at Community High School in Ann Arbor, prepared an article about birth control methods. Naturally, there was controversy about whether they should be allowed to publish the information. An analysis of the struggle that followed should be instructive for other students who find themselves in similar situations. (Note: Throughout the incident, the **Yenta** staff showed a willingness to confront the administration without backing down. The intent of this article is only to explain a common and difficult problem, and explore ways to avoid it.)

What Happened

The **Yenta** staff, aware that it is illegal under Michigan law for teachers to give out birth control information, asked Wiley Brownlee, an administrator sympathetic to student rights struggles, what would happen if they printed such an article. Brownlee didn't know, so he called the central administration, that's where the trouble began. The message from there was that **any** distribution of birth control information was illegal, the First Amendment notwithstanding. If the editors did publish it, they would be suspended. The students, however, were certain that they had a legal right to publish, and planned to distribute the information even if the school administration disapproved.

The next logical step, it seemed to the students, was to bring their case before the board of education. They reserved public speaking time at the December 12 meeting to inform the board of their intent to publish, and ask the board's reaction. From the start, the students made it clear that they considered it their right to publish whatever they wanted, whether the board liked it or not. As they wrote in an editorial, "We do not recognize any school board 'right' to prevent distribution of our newspaper."

Most board members voiced their support for distribution of information about teenage pregnancy and unwanted babies. But they were evasive or opposed to publishing actual how-to information about birth control. Realizing that the **Yenta** article provided that kind of information, the board asked the students to refrain from publishing until the board could get an interpretation of the law. The students, in an effort to show cooperation, agreed to do so.

As it turned out, the board's lawyers advised that preventing publication would be a violation of the students' First and Fourteenth Amendment rights. The article was published in the January 10, 1975 issue of **Yenta**.

A Deceptive Victory

The **Yenta** staff won their confrontation with the board. By working "through channels" the students gave credence to their cause, and were able to ally with adult groups such as the Ann Arbor Education Association and Planned Parenthood around the birth control issue. In addition, the controversy was covered in two local papers and one Detroit television station. On the face of it, their approach was a huge success. However, there was one important failure: they didn't organize other students. In fact, the tactics used by the **Yenta** staff may have hindered organizing.

Proceeding through "proper channels" has generally been an incorrect approach for student organizers. Usually, it doesn't work. Proper channels are obstacle courses, set up and controlled by the administration. Aggressive students occasionally break through and win a concession, but rather than exposing the system as rigged and unfair, those rare victories can inadvertently legitimize the very channels designed to stifle change. Furthermore, students who "beat the system" often come to believe that if they can do it, others can. The board touts them as examples of its fairness and willingness to work with students, and gives them special attention. If no one is actively pressing other issues, and exposing the charade of "proper channels," the myth is strengthened.

Disillusionment

Another unfortunate result of working through the system is the disillusionment of other students. By the time most people have reached high school, all but a few favored do-gooders have a gut-level understanding of the impossibility of gaining significant changes through the system. Occasionally, change does appear to happen as a result of working through the system. Then the lesson to everyone else is "See, it works!" For the

great majority of people who know that there is **something** drastically wrong, to be told the system works is to be told that what is wrong is some personal failure on their part. They simply can't make the system work for them.

Student organizers must translate the powerlessness felt by most students into effective action where it has a chance to work outside the system. That way, win **or** lose, students have a better understanding of the overall political situation, and subsequent actions have a better chance of succeeding.

What Could Have Been Done

Several additional, and more important, steps could have been taken by the **Yenta** staff. They could have passed out a leaflet explaining exactly what was going on, including the administration's scare tactics. They could have started a petition drive to support students' right to a free press. They could have arranged a large show of student strength for the school board meeting.

If the **Yenta** staff had done any of those things, students might have gotten a sense of collective power. The board's decision would have been seen as a capitulation to student power rather than an example of it's "fairness." School boards and administrators only have power because the law grants it to them; the real power lies in the students, because without them schools would not exist. Student organizers should always emphasize that fact. The long range goal of student organizing must be to create conditions where students can realize their power and use it to take control of the educational process.

by Keith Hefner, in FPS

Students and Parents join to fight do-nothing board

At Chelsea High School in southeastern Michigan the student council recently signed a contract with a band to play at their Christmas dance. The school principal, who had earlier said it was all right for that band to play, later decided he didn't want them to play after all and forced the student council to break the contract.

After exhausing all the bureaucratic ways of trying to change this, the student council took the last action open. It called for a sit-in. Two hundred-twenty-three students who sat in at the school's office on the day announced by the student council were all immediately suspended.

The students' next move was, in this situation, a stroke of genius. The student council prepared a public letter stating the students' side of the story and sent it to the parents of every suspended student. The purpose of the letter was to calmly and logically expose the stupid and authoritarian nature of the administration's position. The administration said the band could not play because it was affiliated with the Rainbow People's Party of Ann Arbor. Students condemned the obvious discrimination on the the basis of political beliefs. Since the administration was worried about an obscene light show and leftist leaflets the students repeated that they would not have any leaflets or light shows. They finished the letter with a history of how the administration had never treated the students with any consideration. All parents were encouraged to come to a board meeting and find out the real facts.

The students completely succeeded in exposing how their school was run. The parents gathered in a large auditorium to hear the school board, only to find out the board was meeting in another room. A mass of shouting parents forced the board to come out where the members could be seen. One parent said, "it's a shame the parents have to come in here and demand that." The board then stated that they would not answer any of the parents' questions because they didn't want to prejudge the appeal of students that might come before them. The parents got madder and madder as they each spouted out a two-minute statement and got no reply.

Speech after speech contained lines like, "I moved here five years ago and the worst thing I've found about this community is the attitude of the school board," or "from all the students I've talked to it's been a piling on of aggravation after aggravation," or "I contend that the school system needs a whole revamping right from the top to the bottom." Many parents left the meeting muttering, "we'll fight them in court."

The case of the Chelsea 223 is far from over but a lot has been gained. The students learned that the only response to unjust authority must be for everyone to stand together and defy it. By taking the initiative to explain the justice of their position, they have turned parents into allies. The students gave the community a chance to see their administrators as the two-bit dictators they really are — and the community didn't like it at all. The principal and the school board, who started out so pompous, now look like fools.

from FPS

might otherwise support you?

After you have evaluated each tactic, and decided which ones seem feasible, then you're in a position to devise an overall strategy. That means deciding which tactics to use, at what times, and who will do what.

A Good Example

A student group in a large Ohio city recently decided to organize against the curfew laws there, which said everyone under nineteen had to be off the streets by 10:30 p.m. At the beginning only three students were really ready to do something, but they developed a strategy that made full use of each person's time.

One person, Susan, prepared a petition calling for repeal of all curfew laws. She typed it onto a stencil and printed several hundred copies. Each petition had a space for the student's name, school and phone number. Then she spent a couple weeks finding students at all the high schools in the city who would circulate these petitions in their schools. By keeping track of who got how many petitions (and also by putting her name and number at the bottom of each) she was able to get most of them back.

Meanwhile, Linda approached the city council. She found one moderately liberal member who was willing to listen to her arguments against curfew, and to advise her about how to get speaking time on the council agenda. She also made appointments for herself and a friend to talk with several other council members.

The third student was to develop arguments to use at the council meeting. Since government bodies are afraid to be the first to do anything, Tracy tried to find some other cities that had no curfew, and wrote them asking whether it caused any problems. Figuring that the police would be strongly against eliminating the curfew, he made an appointment to talk with the police chief, and get an understanding of the arguments that would be used in favor of curfew. That way the students could prepare to answer those arguments.

The students planned to call everyone who signed the petition a couple of days before the council meeting. They were going to urge them to attend the meeting, find out who needed rides, and who had cars and could offer rides.

At the council meeting (which had not yet taken place at this writing) council members would face an exceptionally large turnout of young people. There would be a lot of pressure on them to act. If they didn't, it would be possible as young people left the city hall to tell them that there would be a meeting after school the next day to discuss what to do. A mass curfew violation the following night would be one possibility.

This strategy is sound. It is feasible, there is a good chance that the council, confronted by all those young people, will do something, and if it doesn't, it will be easy to move on to a more drastic tactic, because people will already be together and involved.

This strategy also gives everybody a chance to get involved to whatever extent they want. The three students who wanted to put a lot

more time into the project have been able to do so. Those who wanted to put in less time have been able to circulate petitions, and call people about the council meeting. Those who just wanted to put in a little time would be able to just come to the meeting.

Planning an effective strategy, then, means putting together one or more tactics in such a way as to meet all of these criteria, or as many of them as possible. In the next chapter are discussions of some actual tactics you might use.

Have You Always Enjoyed Pushing Kids Around? Now you can get paid for having fun!

Are you dissatisfied with your present position? Do you want a job that requires no work and even less sense? Can you pass the following test?

A. Students should be seen and not _____

B. Spare the _____ and spoil the student

C. The only good student is a _____ student

If you answered **A. heard; B. rod; and C. dead,** then you may have what it takes to enter Famous Principals' School. That's right, the one you've heard so much about. If you were unable to read the questions or write your answers, perhaps you should try Famous Superintendents' School.

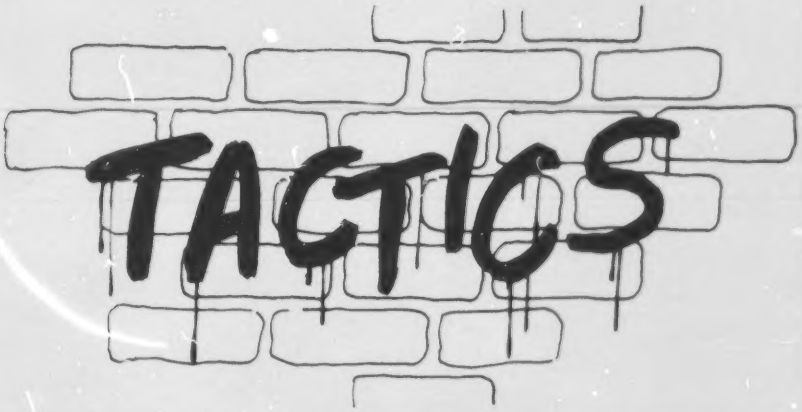
Famous Principals' School was founded years ago by a group of educators. These far-sighted men realized that the supply of felons, child-molesters and former Nazi concentration camp guards was running out. Pooling their talents, they set out to train new men with the same desirable qualities.

Before I enrolled in Famous Principals' School, I had nothing to look forward to but a life of shoe-repair. Now I have 2,500 kids to push around.
• F.W.M.,
Covington, Ky.

Famous Principals' School helped me go from pushing a T-square to being my own executive Yes-man. Now if only I could get rid of F.W.M.
• L.E.D.,
Covington, Ky.

Even if you are not a natural liar, sadist or bureaucratic in-fighter, Famous Principals' School can teach you these necessary skills. Don't delay. Enroll now and join the ever-increasing gravy-train. Just write: Famous Principals' School, 205 Heatherhill Dr., Southgate, Ky.

from Chronicle of Current Events,
an independent student newspaper in Covington, Kentucky



Any strategy you use, whether it is consciously planned or not, will call for using several specific tactics. These tactics can be divided into several categories, which overlap each other in several respects.

First are those that aim to *build a power base* among students and others in the community, including parents, sympathetic educators, and political groups. These tactics include leafleting, education programs, and meetings with various groups. The assumption here is that change will come only if students can present demands forcibly.

Second are tactics that directly *threaten the people in power.* These include demonstrations, picketing, guerilla theater, and legal suits. The assumption behind these tactics is that you have to threaten the power of those who are currently running the school system before they will consider changing anything.

Third are tactics that *appeal to the good will of people,* and to their desire to serve and educate students. These tactics include the appeal of grievances, some forms of petitioning, and discussions with friendly educators. The assumption here is that administrators really want to meet student needs and do things that students feel are important. Unfortunately, that assumption is wrong 90 percent of the time, but it doesn't hurt to maintain cordial relationships with administrators — as long as you aren't coopted.

Of course many tactics fit into more than one of these categories. The divisions that are made in this section are not absolute. For example, building a power base will eventually threaten the people in power. Both might help convince administrators to be more responsive to student needs.

Building a Power Base

One way to develop a base is to conduct educational programs that supplement things going on in school. You could hold afternoon workshops, or "education days" that focus on issues such as local police activity, the latest military activity by the U.S. in Africa or Latin America, or local environmental issues. Films, outside speakers, and other resources can be used. If you can't or don't want to hold these workshops in school, ask churches, or a local college about getting space.

Several students in Central Ohio held a workshop like this to promote a local environmental action group. The group was concerned about the quality of air and water resources in their community, and was especially concerned because a river that ran through the city was becoming badly polluted. Two students in particular, Beth and Susan, decided to sponsor an educational workshop focusing on the river, on its historic uses and present conditions. They chose to hold it in a community center on the river's edge, outside of school, during a weekday afternoon and evening. Beth prepared leaflets announcing the workshop and got several other students to help distribute them at the school door and throughout the community. Susan arranged permission to hold the meeting and found speakers and discussion leaders from factories and community groups. Since the leaflets by themselves didn't seem to spark much attention, Beth used lots of personal arm grabbing and calls to students she knew who might be interested.

About fifty students came, which seemed like a good turnout, especially compared with other community events of the sort. The thirty-odd community residents who came seemed comfortable relating to these students.

During the workshop many opinions were presented representing students, workers, and factory owners.

The meeting ended with people arguing vigorously about the various next steps to take regarding the river.

Beth and Susan had decided not to even try to hold this meeting inside the school for several reasons. They wanted to focus on the issues faced by the riverside community, to engage community residents in the process, and to introduce students to the river itself. Also, they did not want to hassle with school authorities. So, although this was billed as an educational event, it was not at all associated with the normal operations of the school. Later they decided they could have at least asked teachers to announce the meeting in their social studies classes. That would have been an easy way to increase attendance.

Another way to get into political education is to invite speakers from the community into the school. It is important to design these events so they don't fall into the same old patterns of expert lecturer and passive listeners. It is more useful to set up discussion groups that encourage a serious exchange of ideas.

One of the most satisfying aspects of bringing in speakers is that the same students who don't listen to you when you're explaining they don't have any rights, or that the farmworkers are being exploited, often pay close attention to an "outside authority" who says basically the same thing. Many organizing drives have been stimulated by bringing in an expert to talk about the issues involved.

Events like these do more than just allow students to talk about important issues. They also provide a taste of what school might be like when students talk to one another and plan their own education.

For these events to work, they must be widely publicized. If large numbers of students are not involved from the beginning in creating

these events, at least you must see that everyone hears about them well in advance. For that, you can use school newspapers, community newspapers, leaflets and posters — all discussed in the following pages.

Leaflets and Posters

Leaflets can be used for any of several purposes. They can tell people about a workshop or other event that took place, or can be used to build interest in something that's coming up. They can be educational devices, to discuss an issue or problem in the school community, showing how it affects students. Occasionally a leaflet will combine two of these functions — but be wary of trying to fit too much onto one leaflet.

The biggest mistake in putting out a leaflet is to cram line after line of type onto a page and expect people to read it. They won't. Use bold headings at the top, and subheadings throughout the text so people can get some idea what the leaflet is about without having to read the whole thing. Work in drawings or photos or other artwork if you can; maybe an art student you know will help with design. Don't be bashful about copying the exact format of a leaflet someone else has done that you think is eye-catching. Effectiveness is more important than originality.

When announcing an upcoming event, be sure to include the time, place, date, a brief statement about what's happening and why it's important. When planning a leaflet, figure out before you write it just who is the intended audience (students in the hall, shoppers, townspeople at a school board meeting, students in the cafeteria...) and make it clear, at the beginning of the leaflet exactly why this leaflet is important to them. Otherwise they won't read it.

Leaflets should be kept simple, and should focus only on one event or idea. Instead of one long leaflet, try putting out short leaflets frequently, each focusing on different events and ideas. You can save money by printing two messages on one piece of paper and cutting it in half.

Plan your distribution carefully. Where can you contact large numbers of students? Usually major areas around the entrances and cafeteria will be best.

The school administration cannot legally refuse to let you pass out leaflets in school, unless the leaflets are really inflammatory. The Supreme Court, in the *Tinker* decision, clearly ruled that you have a right to free speech in school, and if you ask school authorities for permission to pass out literature, they must provide an adequate time and place for it.

There are two problems with this. First, school administrators quickly forget about court decisions they don't like, and may deny you these rights. Second, we don't believe there is any reason you should submit to school restrictions regarding when and where you can pass out literature. They have no legitimate authority to make such rules. It is actually not at all hard to get around the rules, and if you are careful, you probably won't get caught. Just don't carry too many leaflets with you at one time, so if they get confiscated, the loss will be minor.

Incidentally, if you are distributing literature off of school grounds the

school can't touch you. Just be sure there are no local ordinances restricting you.

Posters have some of the same uses as leaflets, and some different ones. Besides announcing meetings, or coming events, they can also be used to push certain slogans and ideas in front of the student body: "Peace in Southern Africa," "Clean up the River," or "Stop Racist Suspensions."

Posters should be eye-catching and deliver their message swiftly. Use bright colors, large letters, and dynamic drawings. As with leaflets, don't be afraid to copy something else you've seen and liked.

For large quantities and a professional appearance, you can print or silk screen posters, but that is expensive. Check with specialty print shops about this. Or see if those facilities are available in your school.

If you are not allowed to put up posters in the halls, you can talk to friendly teachers about putting them up in classrooms. In any given room, 150 students may see the poster in one day. Or put them in the bathrooms; it will take the administration longer to see them there. You can always affix posters to the walls with glue so that even if the administration wants to get them off, it will take a while. A good camera shot of the principal working furiously to rip down your poster may do more to publicize your event than anything else.

If you put up posters outside of the school, ask people before you use their store, yard, etc. Otherwise, you may create more community resistance and annoyance at your postering tactics than you can handle.

Referendum

One way to build support for an issue is to call for a student vote on it. It may be useful to find out which issues really touch the students. The distribution and call for a vote can raise student consciousness and help mobilize support.

The results of a referendum are most valuable as propaganda for your cause. It is unlikely that the school will make the changes you suggest just because 90 percent of the students vote for them. Therefore, you don't need to be overly concerned about getting official sanction for the vote, such as by doing it through student council or the administration. Both those groups are likely to take months getting it together, and may even distort the issues. You might want to ask an official school group to sponsor the referendum, but if you aren't satisfied with their response, find another way to do it. A simple way is to pass out ballots in school and have them returned to a certain locker.

You should stress that students can only vote once, and make every appearance of fairness. When the ballots are in, you could invite the student council to count them. If, after your results are in the school accuses you of sloppy procedures, remind them that they had the opportunity to do it right, and challenge them do it themselves, next week.

Always keep in mind that the referendum is only a tool, not a goal. Don't put so much time into organizing the technical details of voting that you neglect to put out a leaflet supporting your position. And, once

No place on the school board ballot for young people

In Ann Arbor, Michigan, several young people have run for positions on the school board. The first article here is reprinted from **FPS**, then we've taken parts from the campaign leaflets of two candidates.

Nearly two years ago Sonia Yaco, age 15, ran for a seat on the Ann Arbor Board of Education. She was more qualified than any of the adult candidates. She spent every day in a school where her life was controlled by School Board decisions. She was an elected member of the Student Advisory School Board, an organizer of the Ann Arbor Student Union, and a worker for Youth Liberation and **FPS**. She was nominated as the candidate of an "adult" political party, the Human Rights Party of Ann Arbor.

Sonia decided to run for office to make people aware of the non-existent role that students play in governing themselves. "I'm running to prove a political point," she explained, "the Board of Education controls the lives of students and therefore students should have a voice on the School Board."

When Sonia filed her nominating petitions with the city clerk she had three times the number of signatures required. A few days later a letter came from the Office of Operations of the Ann Arbor Public Schools stating that her name could not be placed on the ballot, solely because she was not yet 18 years old.

The Human Rights Party and Sonia filed suit immediately. Five days before the June 12, 1972 election, District Court Judge Lawrence Gubow refused to grant an injunction which would force the School Board to put Sonia's name on the ballot. She ran a strong write-in campaign anyway and received an impressive 1,363 votes.

Sonia's case rested on two main grounds. The first is that "she and all minors similarly situated suffer from an invidious discrimination as a result of the operation and enforcement of a state law preventing them from aspiring to public office, especially to Boards of Education, regardless of their individual abilities and qualifications. They consequently are being denied equal protection of the laws guaranteed to them under the 14th amendment to the U.S. Constitution." Her complaint noted that "there is no more basis for distinguishing between people on the basis of age in considering qualifications for candidates than there is on sex, race, ethnic background or identification as a student."

The second basic claim of the complaint was that the Human Rights Party "and its membership are being denied First Amendment rights by the operation and enforcement of state laws preventing persons under 18 years of age from seeking public office. The party and its membership have a right to have their views expressed through qualified and able candidates chosen by them to represent the party in elections."

The complaint unearthed a couple of interesting sidelights. One is the fact that an institutionalized adult with a mental age of 3 could be a candidate — while a qualified 15-year-old could not. Another is the fact that, under Michigan law, Sonia **could** run for the governing board of a state university (but **not** for her home town school board).

The court could have judged this case on two possible grounds. First, does the law in question rest on grounds relevant to the achievement of a "valid state purpose?" Second, and much harder to prove, is whether the law in question is "necessary to promote a compelling state interest."

The "compelling state interest" test was not used. The court based this on an opinion by Supreme Court Justice Stewart who said "to test the power to establish an age qualification by the "compelling interest" standard is really to deny a state any choice at all, because no state could demonstrate a compelling interest in drawing the line with respect to age at one point rather than another." **Indeed!!!**

So, on May 11, 1973, the Federal Three-Judge Panel used the "valid state purpose" test to rule against Sonia and the Human Rights Party. The "valid purposes" they dug up are two. First, they said that "excluding minors under the age of 18 from a place on the Board of Education assures some measure of maturity on the part of board members." Second, "the State has an interest in assuring that its school board members will have reached the age of majority in order to have the legal capacity to transact the business of the board, which may include signing contracts."

Sonia's case was immediately appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. Many months later the Supreme Court refused to hear the case.

and affirmed the judgement of the lower court.

Putting forth fancy reasons just adds to the insult. Democracy means "government by the people" but people under 18 can't participate. Only two conclusions can be drawn — either this is not a democracy, or human beings under age 18 are not real people. "Democracy" is a complete sham when nearly one third of the people aren't allowed to participate. Young people are kept in an intolerable political position of powerlessness both in regard to our own lives and to society as a whole. Because of her age Sonia couldn't even file suit on her own behalf. Suit had to be filed "by her next friend," who was her adult campaign manager.

As an appendix to her case, Sonia's lawyers included the Report of the Michigan Governors' Special Commission on the Age of Majority. The Commission found that the legal age of majority has never been based on "maturity." Instead, the age of majority rose to 21 years in England mostly because of the great increase in the weight of arms, knee-length mail shirts, shields, etc., as well as the longer training and increased physical requirements for soldiers demanded by William the Conqueror. Before this time the British, the Romans and the "barbarians" had always granted full adult rights somewhere between the ages of 13 and 15.

The report also noted that, according to all the intelligence tests used in the U.S., "mental age continues to grow throughout childhood, but reaches its maximum in early adolescence, ages fourteen to fifteen."

Even if Sonia and all young people were allowed to run for school boards they would most often lose (unless young people were also allowed to vote). If they did win, they probably couldn't change the schools much because their voice and vote would be drowned out by the conservative majority of board members.

The time of change in the status of young people can come only when we ourselves, both within and outside the schools, organize on a day-to-day basis to gain our human rights and control over our education.

Two young people run on HRP ticket

Diana Autin is an 18-year-old senior at the University of Michigan. She attended Pioneer High School from 1969-1971, during which time she was very active in working for student rights (including the Student Bill of Rights). Diana brought before the Board proposals for trial by peers for students, assumption of student innocence until disciplinary hearings took place, and student votes on the School Board. She used her position as reporter and co-editor of the **Optimist**, Pioneer's school newspaper, to foster school-wide support for black demands and to ease racial tensions both before and after the racial unrest of late September 1970. She helped run HRP's school board campaign last year, and was the first chairperson of the HRP public school committee which came out of the campaign committee. She has continued to work with the public school committee throughout the year, speaking at board meetings as an HRP representative and establishing lines of communication with students and other groups in the Ann Arbor community. Because of her frequent attendance at School Board meetings in the past 4 years, she knows how School Boards operate. In short, she is a progressive and highly qualified candidate for the Board of Education.

Larry Mann is presently a high school student in the Ann Arbor public schools. While in Tappan Jr. High, Larry worked for student rights through the Tappan Student Union and an all-school newspaper.

Larry has been an active member of the Human Rights Party and Youth Liberation of Ann Arbor for several years.

As a student in the schools, Larry is perhaps the best qualified candidate in this election, but his name will not appear on the ballot because he is 14 years old.

The HRP strongly believes that students should have a major role in determining school policy, and we urge people to read our stands on the issues and vote for him as a write-in candidate.

the election is over, use the results to pressure the administration to act. They will be glad to ignore it if you let them.

Running for the School Board

A number of cities already let students sit on the board in a non-voting "advisory" capacity. It is dangerous to accept such positions — you get the appearance of having representation without actually getting it. (See the section on cooptation for more about advisory positions.) In this section we are talking about running for a regular voting position.

Running for school board is a lot of work, so many factors need to be considered before you take out petitions. There are some obvious advantages: first, assuming you will lose (and radical candidates usually do, whether they are students or adults) the campaign itself will provide a good opportunity to go into the community and raise issues like student rights and democracy in the schools. Your views will be published and broadcast alongside of everyone else's. That alone is significant. Second, if you win, you will have access to a lot of inside information that students don't normally see. Student interests will be represented at board meetings, for once. And you will have a public forum from which to criticize and comment on the schools.

There are disadvantages too. Running helps legitimize the school board as an official decision-making unit of the schools, and it implies that those adults should have the power to decide school issues. In the past, some groups have solved that problem by running a candidate who was under age eighteen. Also, young people on the board are in constant danger of being coopted or intimidated to the point where they're not effective.

Naturally, serious thought must be given to deciding which issues to focus on. Since only eighteen-year-olds can vote, the issues will have to

Getting the position is only half the battle

Atha Mathieu has met a wide range of contumely and condescension since she was appointed to her city's Parks and Recreation Commission in San Anselmo, Calif. The reason: she's "only" 12 years old.

Mathieu campaigned for the position earlier this year on the grounds that "parks are for children and we need representatives on the commission that runs them." Enough city council members agreed with her for a 3-2 vote of approval.

Newspapers all around the country have taken it all as a joke. An Associated Press release, reporting on one meeting, said that "... she managed to stay wide awake until the meeting adjourned at 11:15 p.m., well past her normal 8:30 bedtime." One paper became downright scornful and wrote in an editorial:

"It was once thought that age and experience were valuable attributes for the public office seeker and that the vote was given only to those mature enough to know how to use it. But that was before the youth culture emerged in its instant wisdom about every possible subject.

"At her first meeting as a parks and recreation commissioner, Atha argued in favor of a bigger community building, and voted against poison oak removal. The American Revolution was fought in part over the issue of taxation without representation. Now we're appointing children to public jobs, which means representation by non-voters and non-taxpayers. Isn't progress wonderful?"

from FPS

appeal to adults as well as to students. But keep in mind young and/or radical candidates rarely win and that you can "win" issues without "winning" elections. You don't need to compromise your principles — you need to decide how to present the issues so that adults will begin to think about them, instead of being immediately turned off.

Many parents are concerned about the daily oppression in schools, and about racism, sexism, and economic discrimination. Adults running for the school board seldom focus on these issues; they generally talk about student discipline, building construction, taxes and the like. A campaign focusing on real issues like quality education and justice in the schools would be novel enough to create some sympathetic attention.

A good election campaign requires a group of committed people, who are willing to put a good deal of time into the project. You will need to know things about canvassing, press releases, press conferences, petitions, getting people registered, and getting out the vote. A trip to the library should provide you with several good books about running such campaigns. If you can find local people who have done election work in the past, their advice will be invaluable.

Threatening People in Power

To challenge or threaten the administration often means using techniques outside normal channels. Sometimes it will involve behavior which is considered deviant or that borders on illegality. The following tactics can be incredibly effective, if they are well planned. But they can also upset some parents, teachers and administrators. Think clearly about the legal and public relations implications of each of these acts before you engage in them.

It is important, when engaging in militant activities, to state your demands and goals clearly, so that you don't look like a bunch of crazies. In this way you may get some support from other students and adults who do not participate in these threatening actions but who will support your goals. Even so, there is the possibility that adults may overreact to these challenges and try to strike back at you.

Picketing

There are two kinds of picketing: one is informational, the other is disruptive. On an informational picket line, people carry signs or hand out leaflets to confront others with the issues. Check local laws to see if you need a permit for this kind of picketing, and to find out about any special regulations. As long as you don't block traffic or stop people from going where they want, picketing is generally protected as a First Amendment right. A big picket line is a good way to get attention.

Picketing becomes disruptive when it attempts to prevent people from going through the school doors or from going about their normal business. Such pickets are illegal, though they are sometimes justifiable. But before considering that, remember that a substantial line, without using force, may intimidate or convince people not to cross it.

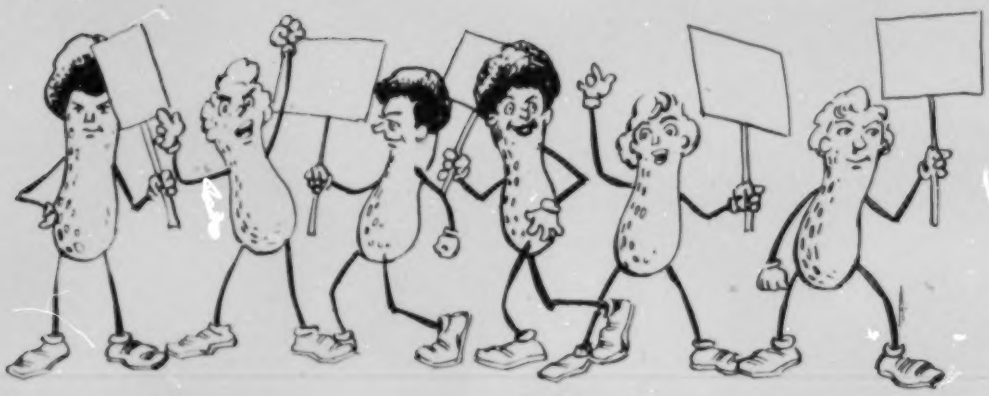
Thus, it can have an impact far beyond informational value and help disrupt the normal operations of the school.

One example of such legal picketing took place in an Oregon school several years ago. A number of students were fed up with the poor quality of cafeteria food, and decided to use a picket line to press for changes. They made signs listing their complaints: "Let's Get Some Variety," "We're Tired of Tired Food," etc. They walked just outside the cafeteria doors so that all students would see them.

One result was that several students stopped and turned around, deciding not to eat in the cafeteria. Others, of course, went right through. After a while, the assistant principal came by and asked the students to quit picketing. He agreed to meet with students and cafeteria staff to discuss the complaints. The students felt that their picketing had been successful. It had alerted some students to the issues, and had caused the school to officially recognize their grievances. They had never intended to close down the cafeteria. The more important outcome would depend upon the results of the conversation between picketers, cafeteria workers and principal. If that conversation did not seem to deal effectively with students' concerns they would try other tactics.

In picketing, remember that you must have a sizeable number of people that are prepared to "put their bodies on the line." A picket must be very disciplined. Everyone involved must know exactly what they're doing and how to give-way to let people through. They also must be able to withstand verbal abuse. If you expect reporters, someone should be prepared to talk with them. Discipline on the picket line is essential for large lines and a few people ought to be specially prepared to take leadership, instruct walkers, and deal with authorities.

Picketing, like other potentially disruptive activities, must be done



right or it can result in behavior that drives away your support.

Guerilla Theater

Guerilla theater is the use of quick skits and actions that shock people and forcefully present new ideas. It is most exciting when it focuses on gut-level reactions. Guerilla theater usually relies on physical action and weird costumes. Satire and surprise endings are effective. It deliberately distorts reality to make its point.

One example of guerilla theater would be for six or eight people to portray relationships between an adult and students in a way that would mimick a prison camp. The principal could whip students who disobeyed, and they could respond by banding together, subduing him and escaping.

Even if principals and students do not normally act that way, they sometimes feel that way. Acting it out reminds everyone of their underlying feelings. An exchange of this sort could occur in the lunchroom, school yard, or hallway. It is quite likely to draw considerable attention. When guerilla theater itself has been completed, the players, still dressed in costumes, can talk with other students about their reactions.

Guerilla theater has two functions. First, it is an organizing tactic. It helps students focus on issues and talk to each other about them. Second, it threatens adults in the school system. No principal or teacher will like being grotesquely caricatured in public by students. But students love it. Guerilla theater lets students know that others share their feelings, and can give people courage to fight back in real life.

Demonstrations

Demonstrations can be a powerful challenge to the authorities in your school. Demonstrations are called for when it becomes clear that "going through channels" isn't going to work, or won't get to the fundamental

"The young people are right in fighting for their God given native liberties," wrote Henry Muhleberg in 1776. Some young people in Washington D.C. are putting up something of a fight right now. A local Ben Franklin 5 and 10 has banned kids from its store because some young people were caught shoplifting. The young people point out that adults are often caught pilfering from the store, but grown-ups have never been forbidden entrance.

A group of young people in D.C. decided to fight that policy. One of the organizers is Ian McNett, Jr., 11, who described what was going on.

"Well, it all started when the 5 and 10 people put up a sign saying no minors were allowed in their store unless accompanied by an adult. The kids just got plain mad after the sign had been up for a week.

"Leah, one of the kids at our school, put notes on their door and we started a petition. The 5 and 10 people said the petition was no good so we started carrying signs that said **Kid Power, Kids are People Too, Change Rules and Let Kids In, Why Majors but Not Minors,** and **Unfair to Kids.**

"Picketing was fun. Some of us got blisters on our feet and some of us were just plain tired. The Ben Franklin people put up another sign saying "Dear Friends, with your help and cooperation, no minors will be allowed beyond the candy counter unless accompanied by an adult. If you need help, please ask cashier." We are not satisfied with this new sign because it is still discriminatory, and we will keep our petition and our picketing going."

from the newspaper Common Sense

problem of who makes decision in the schools.

Some common types of demonstrations include 1) Sit-ins, where students congregate in a classroom, hallway or office during or after hours, 2) walk-outs, where students get up from class and leave the school to congregate in some other place, 3) strikes or boycotts, where students refuse to attend certain classes, or refuse to come to school altogether, 4) use of symbols, such as armbands, special shirts, buttons, etc., 5) wholesale disruption, through noise-making, "Schoolstoppers tactics", or otherwise preventing the school from going about its normal business, 6) harrassing, where students focus on individual teachers or administrators and soap their windows, let air out of their tires, etc.

Most high school student demonstrations in the past have had a largely spontaneous character. Students simply became incensed over this or that condition, and decided on the spot to do something about it. Usually no particular group sat down to plan what kind of demonstration they thought would be best. There is nothing wrong with spontaneity and it almost always results in some little change. But the task of organizers is to anticipate the issues that are going to incite students to demonstrate, and to try to plan those demonstrations so they can be as effective as possible.

A carefully planned demonstration would involve large numbers of students. If just a few students are involved, the administration can easily isolate them and take disciplinary action. If you don't think you can get mass support, don't start with a large demonstration; try some other tactic. But if several hundred students are involved in a sit-in, the administration has to listen. They will usually be afraid to suspend them all.

Because demonstrations involve so many people, you must carefully plan how to protect the participants. Demonstrations should be planned to bring attention to specific issues. For instance, the selective boycott of a certain teacher's class often is more effective than a total boycott of the school, because it focuses attention on a specific problem. Selective actions like this should, of course, be accompanied by a clear statement of the problem, giving concrete examples of what you are objecting to.

The planning of demonstrations includes ending them as well. When should a demonstration end? In the demonstration with 600 students (see box page 25) student leaders felt the principal's agreement to act on two issues and to take the other two to the board was enough of a goal for the moment. Your satisfaction with progress is the key to whether or not you call off a demonstration. But can you call it off? How do you exert discipline over the people with whom you are working so that bargaining and compromise can occur? Six hundred students is a lot in one time and place. You don't want them to get out of control, but you don't want the demonstration to just peter out. If students get out of control, despite your planning, turn their militancy to your advantage. Explain to the administration that you are only representing the students, you can't dictate to them. If he wants them to calm down, he had better act on the demands.

At our school we had a demonstration against the school board over an unpopular policy. Several of our tactics were really good:

- We got popular students to call up students they knew in selected parts of the school telephone directory.
- We got photos of the demo and sent them to national papers (they like having their work done for them).
- We continually questioned the role of the official student organization.
- We had "mass talks" by swooping down on a large body of students in the cafeteria and convincing them to support us.

At other times, these tactics were good:

- When a student was suspended for writing gratitti, we all demanded to be suspended too, "confessing" our own guilt.
- We got candidates to the official student organization to read out the same boring speech.
- We deliberately held meetings without prior permission, and so when the administration hassled us, we complained about the lack of "free speech."

These are issues we should take up later:

- Getting males to go out for the all-female cheerleader squads.
- Call for a student and faculty judiciary committee with the final say.

by Tim Kingston and Kent Worcester from the American School in London

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Black and Latino students in a California high school felt that their culture and academic concerns were not being met by the school. They were joined by a group of poor white students, who also felt that most school programs were focused on affluent white students. After several useless conversations with the faculty, these students organized a mass demonstration to present their views. Using leaflets, phone chains, word of mouth and a little arm twisting, student organizers got 600 students out of classes to demonstrate in the school courtyard. A megaphone (rented from a local rent-it store) helped student leaders talk with those present and get shouting approval of their demands for greater recognition of minority needs in the curriculum, greater respect from teachers and counselors, input into hiring a larger number of minority staff members and a student voice in discipline procedures.

The principal invited the student leaders into his office for a discussion of the issues. Some went with him, while several others stayed outside with the remainder of the students. The several hundred students waited and rapped with each other in the courtyard while the meeting with the principal went on. This kept pressure on the meeting, and when it was over, the student representatives again used the megaphone to report the results.

The principal also appeared to report his reactions and suggestions. Surprisingly, he endorsed most of the student demands. The issue of respect he felt he could act on immediately. The other issues had to be dealt with at the school board level, he felt. Student representatives and he would go together to the next school board meeting to try to get new policies.

The Nixon Supreme Court recently ruled that students who believe they have been disciplined illegally can sue school officials for damages. Until now it has been assumed that school board members have had immunity from liability for actions taken in "good faith" in the preformance of their duties.

Specifically, the Court ruled that school officials could not defend themselves against suits by claiming rights. The decision goes a step beyond the Court's ruling in January that students are entitled to "minimum due process."

Use of marshalls, careful planning, and other techniques of crowd control are necessary for any demonstration.

Legal Action

Frequently you will wish you could file a lawsuit against the school to keep it from interfering with your rights. This is a powerful challenge to the school, because it goes to the only higher authority the school board recognizes, the state. At the same time, legal suits have considerable

drawbacks. They are time consuming and they are expensive. Often they won't be decided until after you have graduated.

However, just the threat of legal action can be an effective means of keeping administrators in line. If the administration tramples your rights, and you have the money and legal resources to sue them, then you will be in a powerful position to tell them to shove it. If they know that you are serious about a legal suit, and that you have the resources to initiate one, they will probably back down.

Usually, though, administrators figure that students are just bluffing when they talk about lawsuits. There's no point in being exposed as a bluffer. Don't talk about lawsuits unless you have checked with a lawer and are serious about it.

Appealing to Authority

This third category of tactics assumes that educators have the best interests of students at heart, even if they sometimes are blinded by other considerations. In this view, students ought to bring their grievances to the attention of school officials first, and hope for fair treatment there. After all, it is easy to do, it is acceptable to adults, and if it fails, no one can accuse you of not trying to go through "proper channels." An over reliance on this view misleads hundreds of student organizers every year. In general, the only reason to go through channels is to prove to everyone that they seldom work.

Petitions

Petitions are a way to show that a lot of students are concerned about an issue. Each petition has a statement (at the top) such as "We the undersigned students (or students and parents) at Washington High School believe that students should not be suspended without a fair hearing before a student court." The statement should be brief, and there should be space for each signer's name. Keep these petitions, or copies of them, on file. The list of names and phone numbers will be invaluable if you ever need to call all your supporters about a meeting or demonstration.

Petitions carry no legal weight, and the administration may simply ignore them — even if you get a large number of students to sign. But practically speaking, considering the reluctance many people have to sign anything, if you can get twenty-five percent of the students to sign, you will be demonstrating a solid base for support.

Incidentally, petitions can also be used as a means of challenging the administration. If you walk into a school board meeting with a stack of petitions, the board may pretend to ignore them, but they will actually see that they are up against an organized, broad-based opposition. Do not be fooled if they pretend to be nonchalant. Just go ahead and strengthen that power base that you have already started building.

Grievance Appeal System

In most schools there is no way other than a petition or individual

complaints for students to communicate to the administration their continuing dissatisfaction. It is possible, however, to design a grievance system whereby students regularly and systematically present their concerns to the administration.

A student or parent may be an ombudsbperson, who seeks out student grievances and makes sure they are fairly presented, and that action is taken on them. In some school systems, students can elect an ombudsperson who is paid and has an office. This is an excellent idea, but still depends on the goodwill of the administration in responding to grievances. Generally, filing grievances can be only a minor part of an organizing campaign. Grievance procedures usually result in "cooling out" dissatisfied students, rather than change. Part of the organizer's task is to translate personal grievances into group complaints — to find the common issues and to organize around them.

Find a Friendly Educator

Some teachers and administrators do understand the oppressive nature of schools, and can be worked with to change things.

A group of high school students in Illinois felt they should have more voice in how classrooms were run, and a few faculty members agreed with them. Two teachers met secretly with the students before school every day for two weeks to work out a faculty evaluation form. When the principal found out about it he locked them out of the early morning meeting room, and forbade them to use the mimeo machine. Students continued to meet in the evening and invited the two teachers. The teachers came, and one of them even brought along her own ditto machine. When the form was ready the teachers discreetly dropped into the background and let the students carry on. But they had helped pinpoint issues and suggest items. They had helped the students feel their project was worthwhile.

A different kind of coalition occurred in the California high school described on page 25, in which 600 students demonstrated in the courtyard. True to his word, the principal presented and supported the students' position on faculty hiring and curriculum change to the school board. The students also made a presentation. The school board appeared ready to reject these demands, until they realized that if they did, the organizers would probably bring 600 students to the next meeting. That convinced the board to give the principal the power to start revisions in the curriculum and to start working with the Teachers Association to get student and parent participation in hiring and promotion hearings. If the principal had not used his influence, and if the students had backed off, the Board probably would not have done anything.

Coalitions with administrators are risky and you should be cautious about hoping for too much. But if the opportunity is there, see what you can do with it. Some teachers and principals also feel trapped by their own roles at school. Don't overestimate their opposition by failing to look for friends within the structure. But don't spend too much time or energy on this hope.

As soon as more than two people get involved in youth liberation work at your school, you've got to start thinking about organizational problems. The trick is to keep things flowing reasonably well within your group, so that you can spend most of your time organizing.

One question you will face is that of structure. Should you try to get a large student union going, or should you work closely with a few friends, and get other people involved on specific issues that interest them? Or should you aim for something in between?

Student Unions

One well organized student union existed in a town outside Boston several years ago. It was a relatively large group — about twenty percent of the students there were members. But with so many people, the union organizers decided that meetings of the whole group should be used only to make general policy decisions. Day-to-day work like writing leaflets, planning demonstrations, and fundraising, was handled by committees.

Committees

There were committees on communications (which handled and distributed leaflets, put up posters, and occasionally published an internal newspaper that was passed out at union meetings); finances (which planned fundraising events, and kept a bank account); and political action (which handled demonstrations, negotiations, etc.); plus a newspaper committee that published an underground school paper.

No one could be on more than one of these committees. That prevented a few people from doing everything, and encouraged new members to take more responsibility. Frequently, committees would work together for a large project such as a demonstration. The political action committee would do the basic planning, the communications committee put out leaflets, and the finance committee raised the necessary money.

Each committee met as often as necessary, and made brief reports at general meetings. The mass meetings were used for *information*, for *education* (usually an interesting speaker, followed by a small group discussion); and *deciding over-all issues and strategy* (should we

organize around textbook bias or the locked bathrooms?). People would discuss the choices, and then vote.

In this case, the student union structure worked out well. There were, inevitably, a half-dozen people who did most of the work, ran the meetings, and generally kept track of what was going on. But they made room for other people to take responsibility, and they were able to hold the organization together without becoming too dominant.

Sometimes student unions don't work out well. The committee structure bogs down, or the work just doesn't get done, or there aren't enough interested students to form something that could legitimately be called a union, or there are major splits into factions.

Small Groups

In that case, be content to think in smaller terms. You can get a local youth liberation group going with just a few people. Together, plan some event that will publicize your group's existence, and dramatize a youth liberation or student rights issue. After that, a few new people may get interested, and you can slowly build up strength.

The biggest difference between these two structures, a large student union with mass meetings, and a small group or "cadre," is the way decisions are made and work is divided. In the first situation, everyone who is interested enough to show up for a meeting gets an equal voice in choosing issues and strategies. Because a student union tries to represent all students, even those who don't do the actual organizing work get a say in what is to be done. Everyone tries to do some work, but some may only promise and not show up.

In the second situation, the smaller group, decisions are made by the most interested people, the ones who do most of the work. It's fairer, in some ways, but it's less representative of the whole student body.

Both have certain advantages. What's important here, as with so many other choices that face a student group, is that you *consciously* look at the alternatives involved, discuss the possibilities, and make a deliberate decision. Don't just uncritically accept one structure or the other because it "happens" to come about.

Recruiting New People

In building a strong student organization, nothing is more important than involving new people, at whatever level of commitment they feel comfortable with. Only by actively doing this can you keep your group alive, and moving ahead. Here are some suggestions:

1) Have meetings that leave people wanting to come back.

2) Avoid personal jokes and "remember when" stories at meetings. People who have been around for awhile shouldn't huddle together in their own groups. They should consciously scatter around, and talk to new people. Set up an agenda for meetings, and a time limit. Look over the section on meetings.

3) Make personal contacts with new members. Whether or not

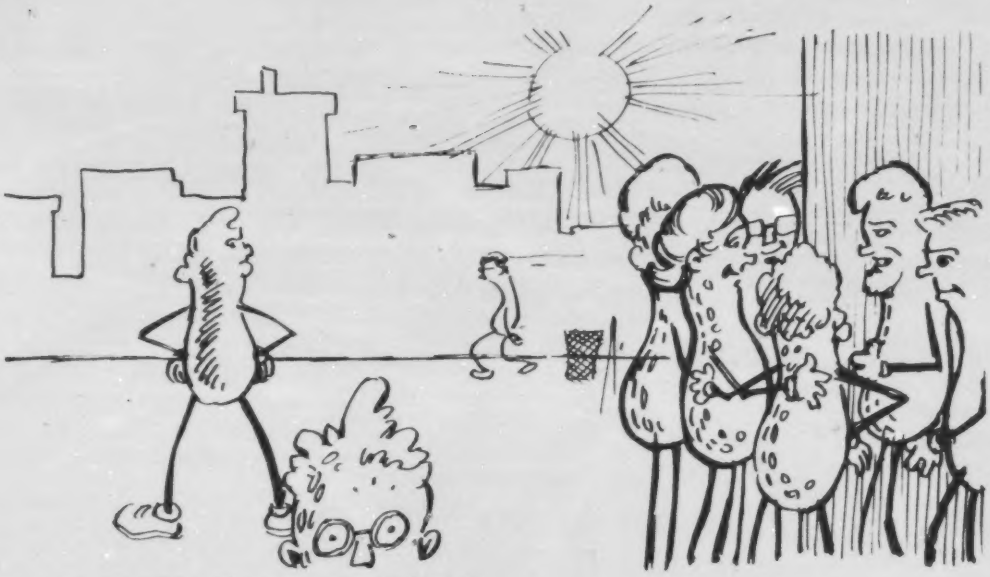
someone stays involved with an organization often depends on whether they feel comfortable with other members on a personal basis.

4) List the various organizations, cliques, and interest groups that exist in your school. How many of them are represented in your group? Which ones do you have a chance of uniting with, even if only on one specific issue? Approach some of the leaders of those cliques or organizations and discuss your common interests.

5) Divide the work as much as possible. Each time a new project comes up, make a list of all the little things that need to be done. Have someone, or several people take responsibility for each area. Generally, if people support your overall goals, and they feel responsible for a specific, clearly defined task that will help accomplish that goal, they will do it. The important thing is that they feel it's their responsibility, and that if they don't do it, no one else will.

6) Make room for people at all levels of commitment. If someone only wants to take a little responsibility, like putting up a couple of posters, make sure they get the responsibility for doing that much. Even doing a small job will make them feel slightly more committed to the group; next time they may do more.

7) Find out how your group looks to outsiders. Talk to a few people who seem to be politically-minded but who aren't members, and to some



There are many different groups and cliques in your school. Try to involve people from as many of them as possible in your group.

people who were members, but dropped out. Why did they quit? Does the group seem like a closed clique to them? If so, what could be done to change that?

8) It isn't easy, once a group has established certain ways of doing things, to open it up to new people and to new ideas. If tensions seem to be growing as new people try to get involved while old members unconsciously want to keep things the way they were, then talk about that at a meeting.

Working With Other People and Groups

Watch for opportunities to ally with other groups in the school and community around specific issues. Teachers, janitors and other school employees will often have the same interests as you. So will some members of the community.

Teachers are probably the group you will have the most contact with. In some respects, teachers seem like the most direct oppressors of students. They are the ones who, day-to-day tell you what to do and enforce all the little school rules.

However, teachers really don't have much more power than you do. If they step far out of line, they get reprimanded, or even fired. They can make rules about gum-chewing and talking out of turn in class, but they have very little voice, and no real control, when it comes to larger policy decisions. Like you, many teachers are fed up with having to deal with rules made by a few other people, school board members and administrators, who usually do not have to obey those rules themselves.

Get to know good teachers outside the classroom, as people. When teachers' contracts come up for renewal, talk to them about the issues involved, and encourage them to look at how the school is run as well as salary issues. If you have a strong enough student group together, you could even negotiate with the teachers; maybe they will demand certain rights for students if you support their full contract. You might even go on strike with them if the administration turns down the contract. But make it clear that if you publicly support their demands, they have got to show interest in and respect for you and your rights.

Then, there are all the other school workers: custodians, cooks, nurses, and secretaries. Have you ever really talked to them about how they feel about their jobs, the school, the students, and the administration? Do so. Find out what their grievances are, and consider including those in any list of demands or issues you publish. If any of these workers run into contract problems, or go on strike, talk to them about their situation, and find out ways you can support them. You will not only be helping them win the working conditions they deserve, you will also be building potential allies for the future.

Parents

There must be *some* parents in the community that support what you are doing. As you find out who they are, keep their names on a list, and

Chicano Student Union resists racism and tracking

The Chicano Student Union was formed by some students who were aware of the problems that the Chicano faces in this school system.

The C.S.U. is a school organization based on educating administrators and students on the needs of the Chicano in the schools.

It is about time that the Chicano speaks up for what he thinks. We have suffered for too long in this school system. The Chicano Student Unions all over have begun to realize that the Chicano doesn't drop out of school, he gets pushed out because we don't accept their racist bullshit.

We feel that our schools that belong to us should relate to all students, and put an end to the tracking system which separates all low-income students from the middle class. It keeps back all third-world cultural background students.

The tracking system has been a very effective system that forces most of the Chicanos in their long time barrios and gives them a second-hand job, and then to top it off they say we're non-goal oriented. Let's unite and destroy the tracking system.

The Chicano Student Union feels that ever since the the white racist started his schools in Aztlan, they never related to us, they always told us the gringo history. That is just one example of how they bored us so that we can be back in the streets, so the pigs can get us and send us to jail, where all our brothers are already at. The Chicano community must act fast because every day 76 out of 100 Chicano students are being pushed out.

The Chicano community in reality is paying its taxes to a bunch of racists who are using its money to throw its hijos out of school. That is how much the school board cares about the Chicano!

Mario Ortiz

watch for ways that you can work with them. In every community there are other radical adults who also care about changing school — maybe for the same or different reasons than you. Sometimes you may work with them.

The school board, for instance, is worried more about keeping parents happy than students. After all, parents vote, students do not; and most school boards are elected. So, if you are appearing before the board, call all the sympathetic parents you know, and ask them to show up. Students should still take the initiative and present the main arguments, but having the parents with you for support can't hurt.

If someone gets suspended because they were involved in organizing (passing out an underground paper, putting up posters, etc.) have your parent supporters make irate phone calls to the principal and school board members. Administrators don't like that, and maybe they'll think twice before they take such action again. Meanwhile, the parents will be finding out just how repressive the school really is, and will be more inclined to support your future demands.

After your group has been together for a time, and has organized around one or two issues, take out some time to evaluate your progress. By looking at your mistakes and successes, and why they happened, you will be in a better position to plan next strategies. There are several questions you can ask yourselves in this evaluation:

- How far have we come toward reaching our goal? This question is easier to answer if you had a specific goal, (instituting a minority studies course) rather than a general one (educating students about tracking), but you should make an effort at answering it in either case.
- Is the issue resolved? Does more work still need to be done on it?

- What forces are at work in the school, working both for and against you? Even if you evaluated these before starting your organizing, they have probably changed since then. Are people more interested in the issue now than before? Or are you losing momentum? What new supporters and opponents have you made?
- How successful have your strategies and tactics been? What has been particularly successful, or unsuccessful? How could things be improved?
- Finally, talk about where you go from here. The situation that existed in the school a few months ago no longer exists, your organizing has, in some way, changed it. What new tactics and strategies need to be adopted now?

In school you pick up certain skills — how to guess what answers you're supposed to put down on a test, how to persuade the teacher that you really did do your homework but your dog ate it, how to sleep in class, etc. Unfortunately, these skills won't often do you much good as an organizer.

As an organizer, you will need to know things like how to raise money, how to publicize your ideas, and how to negotiate with the principal. These skills can really be learned only through experience, during which you examine your successes and failures as you go. But this chapter will help you get started.

Fundraising

For most groups, the only unavoidable expense is printing leaflets and other literature. However, organizations being what they are, if you have more money you will undoubtedly spend it (and a little bit more) on things like postage, film rentals, refreshments at meetings, office equipment, legal suits, and maybe even office space and salaries.

Don't get too carried away with fundraising. A group that spends all it's time raising money simply so it can survive to raise more money sounds like a waste of time. And it is. But there are plenty of organizations around that are doing just that.

Don't blame all of your problems on lack of money. Money helps, but it rarely makes the difference between success and failure. If your group is really dedicated, it should be able to produce results on a shoestring budget. If you are lazy and uninspired, money will only allow you to be lazy and uninspired for a little longer.

It is easiest to raise money for a specific project. Select an issue to focus on before you do fundraising. Then people can contribute if they feel strongly about the issue. This is especially true when you're soliciting people individually for money. On the other hand, things like rummage sales, where people are giving money to get something and not necessarily because they support your issues, will be just as effective whether you have selected an issue or not.

Fundraising projects provide a good chance to involve new people. You can easily involve new people in the responsibility for a rummage

sale or event. With that in mind, here are a few possible ways to raise money. With imagination, you will be able to think of more.

Suggested Methods

Passing the Hat — This is the easiest way to meet basic expenses. At every meeting, give a little pep talk explaining that if everyone will just donate a quarter or so, you will have enough money to print a leaflet, make posters or whatever. Then go around and collect from everyone. It takes just a few minutes, nobody feels any poorer for it, and the money is coming right from the students — giving them a slightly stronger commitment to the group.

Pledges — There are a lot of people around, students and adults, to whom $5.00 a month isn't much. Urge people who support your goals to pledge a certain amount each month, say $1.00 to $10.00. This gives you a somewhat reliable monthly income, so you can budget and plan for the future. One person can take responsibility for seeing that each pledger comes through each month.

Door-to-Door Solicitations — This will work only if you have a not-very-controversial project in mind, like a recycling center. It takes time, but has the advantage of providing personal contact with people in the community. Before going around door-to-door, distribute leaflets explaining your project, so residents will recognize the name when you come around. If you can get the Chamber of Commerce, Jaycees, Kiwanis, or some other established group to endorse you, people will be less suspicious. Check local laws before starting, as you may need a permit to collect money.

Carnivals — Many schools have annual carnivals, sponsored by the student council, where different clubs and organizations set up booths. Instead of chuckling over how dumb such carnivals are, take advantage of them next time and set up a booth. Community groups like the Kiwanis often sponsor such events, too, on the Fourth of July or Memorial Day. One student union set up a "Kill a Hippie" booth, where

Underground paper gets money to involve youth in government

In the Heart of the Beast, a high school and college underground paper in Leominster, Mass., has managed to get $200 from the government to pay its printing costs. The Montachusetts Opportunity Council, a federally-funded program, gave them the grant "to involve them, young and old, in the decision-making processes of government."

One picture in the last issue of **The Beast** shows a man holding a poster with the caption "Nixon in '72." In the middle of the poster are four gun shells, one unused, the other three spent. The Montachusetts Opportunity Council is now wondering if this is the way it wants to involve youth in government, and it is not yet certain whether more money will be forthcoming.

from FPS

for a nickel a shot, you could throw water balloons at self-sacrificing hippies. They made an ironic $30.00 that weekend.

Rummage or Garage Sales — One big advantage of these is that no investment is necessary, since all items are donated. You can easily pull in $25 to $200. Look for a church or large building where you can hold the sale — more people will come than if it is at someone's house. One person should be in charge of publicity — put posters or notices at grocery stores, day care centers, and churches, and be sure there is a classified ad in the local paper. If you can find someone who has worked on such sales in the past, they will be able to tell you where to publicize it.

Meanwhile, a couple of months before the sale, another person should start collecting stuff to sell or (if you have no place to store it) at least lining things up. Call as many people as you can, and ask if they would like to donate anything: offer to pick it up if you have a car.

Student Council — You may be able to get a small grant from the student council for a specific project. It all depends on how sympathetic the council members are, how much money they have, and how much autonomy they have in spending their money.

Merchants — When you have specific projects underway, you can also ask local merchants to donate supplies and equipment. To pull this off though, you will need a respectable-sounding, not-too-radical project.

Other Fundraising — Some groups have had successful concerts to raise money, but often the cost of renting the auditorium, plus anything you have to pay the bands, is so high you end up in debt. Bake sales are more realistic, but take a lot of work. You could also try car washes and dinners. If someone in your group is an artist, or photographer, print or silk-screen posters or T-shirts with a student rights theme and sell them. Or sell lottery tickets for something — "For just half a dollar you too can have a chance to win this fine, 60-room high school...." The possibilities are endless.

Working — almost every organizer ends up contributing as much as they can from their own pockets. If you are really committed, and have a little extra cash, drop five dollars in the hat at meetings. You can't expect everyone else to do that, but your example can't hurt.

Mimeographing Skills

The cheapest way to print leaflets is to find a mimeograph machine and learn how to use it well. Local churches, public agencies, civic organizations, political clubs, and maybe your own basement or attic, often have machines. If you locate one that you can have regular access to, have someone show you how to use it. It will seem somewhat complicated at first, but with a little practice you'll soon be turning out clean, crisp copies. Beware, however, of thinking it will be so easy that you don't need to spend some time learning the machine before you are

ready to publish your first leaflet. If that happens, you are likely to turn out something wretched looking, perhaps illegible.

If possible, you should stand around while someone else is running the machine and observe carefully, asking questions and maybe even taking notes. Then, prepare a practice stencil and try printing a few hundred copies. If everything comes out right, great. If not, find out what you're doing wrong. This saves you the embarrassment of passing out your mistakes at school.

Power Structure Research

It is possible to spend your whole life researching just who controls local schools, the state school board, the economy and the world. But don't do all that research; if you do, you won't have time to do anything about whatever you discover.

Who is on the Board?

It is useful, though, to spend some time digging into your local situation. Start with the school board. By looking up the state school laws in the library, you can find out just what powers the school board has, and what powers the state has. If, for example, you wish to abolish compulsory attendance, you would be wasting time to go to the local school board, because compulsory attendance laws are made (and can only be repealed) by the state.

On the other hand, maybe you are just fighting to be able to leave school ground for lunch. The local board probably does have the power to make that change, though they may deny it just to get rid of you. By knowing who has what powers, you can avoid getting shuffled around from group to group.

School boards generally delegate a lot of responsibility to principals. Ask the board for a copy of it's regulations, so you can find out just what your principal (and dean, and other administrators) can and cannot do.

If you ever expect to appear before the school board, to get certain policies changed or dropped, it is useful to know who is on it. Their names, what part of town they live in, their race, sex, occupation, corporate and business connections...they're all relevant. Are they elected or appointed? If elected, the League of Women Voters in town may be able to provide information about them; also look at copies of the local newspaper that came out just before and after the election.

If they're appointed (and about ten percent of all the country's boards are) find out who appointed them, and ask that person for information about their qualifications.

Then go to a few school board meetings and watch how members vote on controversial issues and note which members seem to have the most influence. Of course many boards do a lot of their sensitive work in private or informal sessions, but you should be able to size them up pretty well from observing public meetings.

You can get more detailed, though sometimes biased, information by

Who do school boards represent?

Are school boards really "representative?" Not very, says Girard D. Hottleman, director of educational services for **The Massachusetts Teacher.** In a recent nationwide survey, Hottleman claims to have confirmed the growing number of reports that school boards **do not** represent the public. "American schools whose constituencies are primarily the poor," says Hottleman, "are governed primarily by upper-middle-class, propertied, monied, white, middle-aged Republican men. If we assume that school board members pursue the ordinary amount of self-interested behavior, then the actions of typical school board members are not apt to be harmonious with the needs of public school children." Some findings:

- 51.2% of the general population are women; 20% of school board members are women.
- 37% of registered voters in the communities surveyed are Republican; 63% of school board members are Republican.
- The average income in communities surveyed is $11,694; the income of board members is $22,682.

interviewing the board members themselves. Decide in advance just what information you want from them: why they wanted the job; what qualifications they feel they have; why they think they were elected, or appointed; their stand on student rights; whether they think there should be students on the school board, etc.

How are the Schools Financed?

It's also productive to look into how the schools are financed. Ask the library and school board for information on this. What percentages of the budget come from city, state and federal sources? Does any of the money come with certain stipulations or conditions attached? Are local school funds raised through property taxes, or through other means? Many community groups oppose property taxes because they are regressive, that is, they hurt lower-income families more than the rich.

Whenever a school millage or bond issue comes up for election, you may have an organizing issue. These issues often win or lose by narrow margins; by organizing for or against one (or promising/threatening to do so) you can exercise a certain amount of power. Remember though, that your arguments have to be convincing to ordinary voters. If you argue that a millage issue should be defeated because the school is denying students their rights, a lot of voters won't care; some will even consider that to be an argument in the school's favor.

But if you can think of twenty ways the school wastes money, and list them on a leaflet that you distribute at shopping centers on Saturdays, you will have nine administrators out of ten downright worried. And it shouldn't be hard to come up with a list of ways the school wastes money. Just keep your eyes open, and ask around. If you have specific demands, or alternative uses for the money, now is the time to bargain with administrators.

There is another way you can challenge the administration by threatening it's financial base. The state decides how much money to give each school district by looking at the attendance figures. In some states, they choose one specific day, usually in September, and divide

the money according to how many students show up for classes on that day. It would take some research, but it could be a powerful tactic to threaten a strike on that day. Ask your friendly librarian to help you look up the state laws to see if the school operates like this.

Who Makes Decisions on What?

In the section on issues, we discuss the power of the principal and teachers in the local school. This is another area for research. Who makes what decisions, with what criteria in mind? You can try to get permission to observe a faculty meeting, or a friendly teacher may be able to give you inside information on which teachers run the show. Many times the faculty will have several committees to advise the principal on different matters. If you research who's on what committee, you have more information on how to influence the power structure of your school.

In the same manner, teachers can tell you about the principal. How does she run meetings? What groups in the community is she most responsive to, or scared of?

Negotiating

At some point, you may want to negotiate certain proposals or demands with the administration. Or the administration, fearing your group's power, may ask you to negotiate. In either case, intelligent preparation can spell the difference between success and mere frustration.

Before beginning any negotiations, your group should meet and discuss several things. What demands or proposals are you going to make? How much are you willing to compromise on those things? If you demand a little extra, you will have room to compromise.

Judging Your Support

Then decide how much power you hold. How much support do you have among students? Among the community? Could you organize an effective demonstration if the administration didn't grant your important demands?

Next, figure out who has the power to make the changes you want. Remember the group that spent weeks trying to get the principal to change the literature policy — only to have him eventually announce that he didn't have the power to do so? When you begin negotiations with someone, ask them point-blank whether they have the authority to make the changes you want. If the answer is no, find out who does, and reschedule the negotiating session to include them.

Finally, remember that you may have to re-negotiate if it doesn't work out the first time — if promises aren't kept, if new issues arise. So keep up your contacts, maintain your student support, and keep working on new demands.

Several Suggestions

Ellen Lurie, in her book *How to Change the Schools*, lists some

suggestions for negotiating that are paraphrased here:

- Insist that the school officials put all promises in writing, before you leave. Otherwise you may find that they forget about what they promise.
- The negotiating group should be fairly large, and represent a good cross-section of your group.
- Be sure that, if you make a long presentation of your case, you still leave them time to respond. You must force them to take some position.
- If school officials tell you they have to "study" the matter further, be wary of a stall. Give them a time limit within which to come up with a decision, and schedule a follow-up appointment.

Some other suggestions are made in *The Organizer's Manual:*

- Anticipate your opponents' arguments, and prepare to counter them.
- Try to negotiate on your own turf, or at least in neutral territory. To meet in your opponents' offices gives them an edge.
- Be cynical and skeptical. Don't be fooled by opponents who are "nice."
- Watch for attempts to divide and conquer your delegation. Don't hesitate to divide and conquer the opposition, especially if you sense some sympathizers on their side.
- If you see your side getting into a bind, call a recess and discuss the situation with your delegation.
- Never negotiate for time consuming "committees," "commissions," or "appropriate channels."
- If you are winning, allow your opponent to save face.
- Research your demands. If you are demanding an end to the dress code, find out whether courts in your area have tended to uphold or to strike down dress codes in the past. Find examples of school districts like yours that don't have dress codes, and are surviving nonetheless. Find out what changes in the dress code students deem most important. Get names of several teachers who agree that the dress code should be dropped.

Different Approaches

When meeting with school officials, several types of approach are possible. You can go in with a firm list of uncompromisable demands, and a threat to call a walkout if those demands aren't met immediately. Or you can be polite and unthreatening, and act like you accept the school's authority, but are just asking for a few minor changes. Or you can take an attitude somewhere between those.

Each of these approaches is appropriate under certain circumstances. *Generally*, the more militant you are, the less likely school officials are to meet your demands — they'll feel like they have to assert their authority — but if you have a lot of students behind you, students who are willing to walk out if the demands are not met, then a militant attitude could work.

At other times, a more moderate approach is called for. In any case, it is important for your group to discuss these different approaches before negotiations begin, and to agree on how to act, and how to change

signals. Otherwise you may end up working at cross-purposes.

One way to combine these approaches is for you to have a negotiating "team," several people who play different roles in a meeting with school officials. One person can be quiet, another militant and loud, and another gentle and persuasive. This might really confuse school people. If you try this, be sure you agree on one of you as the leader or conductor of this team, so you aren't confused.

Using the Media

You're never likely to become best friends with the local media, but you can use them to your advantage.

Newspapers and radio and television stations always need news. But it's got to be different and interesting. Your job, if you want to publicize your group's existence and it's aims, is to watch for significant news events that occur, to invent news when nothing is happening, and then to let the media know about it.

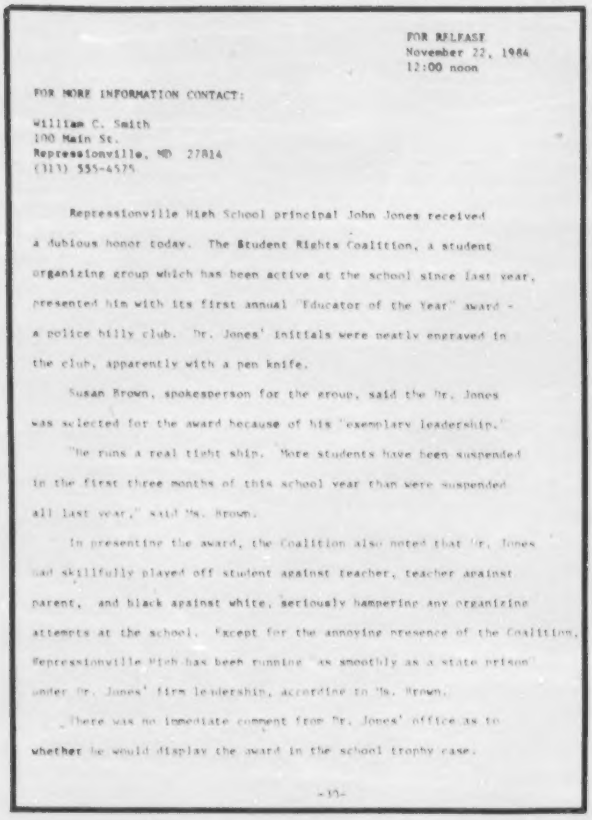
Suppose 250 students show up at a school board meeting because the smoking policy is to be discussed, and they want to have a say in what's decided. That's news. If reporters from all the local media aren't present, call their offices to tell them, so they can send someone over. If they don't have anyone available to cover it for them, offer to let them interview you over the phone. (If you are sure there's going to be a big turnout, tip the press off in advance.) Get students at the meeting to talk to reporters who are present, giving their views.

If nothing noteworthy is happening, then create some news. That's what the Student Rights Coalition did in the sample news release shown here; they invented an award, and gave it to someone, strictly as a way to get media coverage. Tactics like this will only work, though, if you do something that is really clever and unusual.

Press Releases

When something has happened, or is about to happen, that you think the media would be interested in, send them a news release. The release should look something like the one shown here. Keep the following points in mind:

- The release should be typewritten, with wide margins on all four edges, two to three inches at the top, and should be double or triple-spaced.
- It should be well-written. Get someone with experience on a school or local paper to help. Use short words, short sentences, and short paragraphs for most of it.
- Be "objective" if you want to get coverage. You can inject opinions by quoting people; the rest of the story should be factual.
- Be sure to include all relevant information: who, what, when, where, and sometimes why and how.
- Use 8½x11 paper, typing only on one side. Try to keep the story concise enough to fit on one page; if it must be longer, type the word



FOR RELEASE
November 22, 1984
12:00 noon

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

William C. Smith
100 Main St.
Repressionville, MD 27814
(313) 555-4575

Repressionville High School principal John Jones received a dubious honor today. The Student Rights Coalition, a student organizing group which has been active at the school since last year, presented him with its first annual "Educator of the Year" award - a police billy club. Dr. Jones' initials were neatly engraved in the club, apparently with a pen knife.

Susan Brown, spokesperson for the group, said the Dr. Jones was selected for the award because of his "exemplary leadership."

"He runs a real tight ship. More students have been suspended in the first three months of this school year than were suspended all last year," said Ms. Brown.

In presenting the award, the Coalition also noted that Dr. Jones had skillfully played off student against teacher, teacher against parent, and black against white, seriously hampering any organizing attempts at the school. "Except for the annoying presence of the Coalition, Repressionville High has been running as smoothly as a state prison" under Dr. Jones' firm leadership, according to Ms. Brown.

There was no immediate comment from Dr. Jones' office as to whether he would display the award in the school trophy case.

-30-

Left: This is generally what a press release should look like, except that you should leave much bigger margins and, when space permits, type it triple-spaced. As this release shows, sometimes you can get publicity by **creating** news.

MORE at the bottom of the first page, and a page number at the top of the next page. At the end of the story, type "-30-", which in newspaper language means END.

- At the top of the page tell who the release is from, and include the phone number an editor should call for more information.
- For events that have already happened, type FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE at the top. When necessary, you can put down an advance release date. For example, if a member of your group was going to make a speech at 1:00 p.m., October 4, you would date it for 2:00 p.m., October 4. But if you are telling about the speech after it was given, you would write FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE at the top.
- Send releases to all media in the area. Check the yellow pages, under Newspapers, Radio and Television. There may be some you haven't thought of.
- Editors like to shorten stories by chopping off whole paragraphs, starting at the end. Get all essential information into the first part of the story.
- With small newspapers, it sometimes helps to take a story into the office in person. For weeklies, try to get there at least three or four days before the paper comes out; five or six days is better.

Once you've given a release to a newspaper or radio station, they will consider it theirs. They may throw it out, they may print it as it is, or they may rewrite it, occasionally distorting it almost beyond belief. That's the price of fame.

Other Ways to Get Attention

There are other ways to get into the media. Call in to radio talk shows

whenever you get a chance; if there is an especially appropriate subject one night, call your friends and have them call in too.

Try letters to the editor. In small towns, they stand a good chance of being printed. Keep them short, concise and interesting.

Get to know the reporters who cover school affairs — you may run into them at school board meetings, or other events. Tell them about interesting things they might want to cover, but don't be pushy.

And don't overlook the school newspaper. You could submit articles to it, or better yet, perhaps get to know some reporters for it, who can do the writing for you. If the faculty adviser likes to censor articles, material by regular staff members may have a better chance of getting in than something written by an outsider.

Role Playing

Before you go into a new situation — negotiations, speaking before a group, picketing — it helps to practice. You can anticipate what will happen by doing role playing

In role playing, members of your group temporarily pretend to be somebody else. Say you are going to speak before the board next week about whether students should be allowed to smoke on campus. One member of your group could play the part of a student giving a speech in favor of such a policy. Several other members could play the parts of school board members — some sympathetic, some antagonistic, some wishy-washy — who question the student, or try to put her on the spot. Another group member might play the part of a parent in the audience, throwing out sarcastic comments that the speaker would have to deal with. You could see what the speaker would have to do to stay cool and remain effective. At first it may feel awkward to act out roles, but it usually results in a much more effective action later.

If you're going to picket a store because it gives young shoppers second-class treatment, you might have several people play the role of the picketers, one person play the store owner, and several other people could be shoppers, a reporter, a cop, and a spokesperson for your group.

Run through the entire picketing sequence several times, with different people playing different roles. One time the store owner could be openly antagonistic, another time more liberal, and so on.

You can use similar techniques any time you're going to present youth liberation ideas to a group. Practice making short speeches at meetings, with everybody asking questions which you think your opponents will ask. With role playing you can learn to handle new situations ahead of time. You may also learn a lot about your opponents by playing their roles, and learning what goes on in their heads.

After you "play the role" discuss what happened and refine your strategy based on what you learned.

A Sample Role Play

Scene: The school disciplinarian has been beating certain students,

and the principal has refused to listen to students' requests for an investigation. A small group of students is now sitting in his office. They say they will stay until he makes an investigation. A policeman arrives with orders not to make arrests or do anything to give either the school or police department a bad image. Now, the students must say or do anything they like, only they must always refer to the policeman as "pig."

Discussion: Feelings of rising frustration and hostility; potential for explosion into violence; question of losing sight of goal of action. General discussion of name-calling and stereotyping as psychological violence, their effect of alienating observers; importance of seeing the "opponent" as a human being for any possibility of communication — desire for honest communication as one aspect of non-violence.

Scene: That disciplinarian is still paddling students; the protesters are now picketing the principal's home to dramatize their plan for an investigation. They have five minutes to organize themselves to deal with a reporter, an irate neighbor and the principal himself.

Discussion: Effects of various roles; how well group discipline is maintained in face of harrassment; press relations; effectiveness of contingency planning.

—from: Training for Non-Violent Action for High School Students. Bidge McCay

Lining Up a Lawyer

A common bit of advice in this pamphlet is "Ask a lawer about...." Fine, but that leaves the problem of "Where do we find such a lawyer?"

If you have money, it's easy. Ask one of the groups below to recommend a good civil liberties oriented lawyer near you, and then

consult with that lawyer at her regular fee. That fee, however, could be high — like $60 an hour.

Chances are you can't afford that, and will need to find a lawyer who will consult with you for free. The first step is to call an American Civil Liberties Union, National Lawyers Guild, or Legal Aid office near you. They have offices in most large cities. Describe your problem, and explain that you want to talk with a lawyer to find out where you stand, and what your options are. Generally, one of these three groups will be able to connect you with someone.

Just because a lawyer is willing to consult with you though, doesn't mean she can or will take a case to court for you. But even if she can't, she may be able to recommend other lawyers to ask, or she might agree to write a threatening letter to the principal.

Besides a lawyer's fee, there will always be other court costs involved when you push for your rights through the legal system. You may simply be unable to afford them. If so, start looking for other ways to get your rights — and join the millions of other Americans who can't get justice because they can't afford it.

Meetings

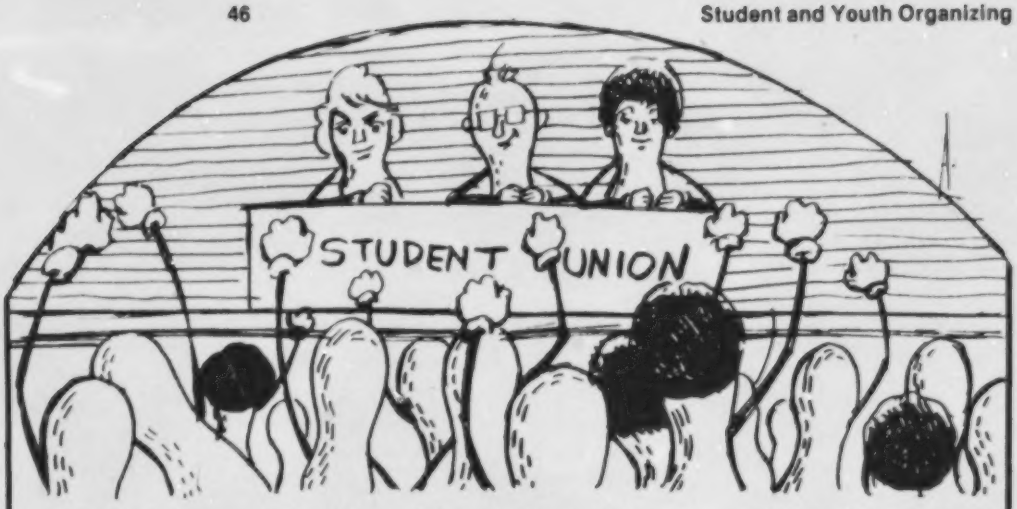
Dull meetings will chase away potential allies faster than anything else. Yet good meetings can provide a tremendous opportunity for building and unifying your group. Here are four suggestions for good meetings:

Plan the mechanics of each meeting well. If you want a large turnout, start doing publicity a week in advance. Use posters, leaflets, and word of mouth; if there is a specific subject that will be discussed, say so on the leaflets. Be sure that the time, date and place are clear. Estimate the turnout you'll get, and prepare the room beforehand, putting the chairs in a circle, or whatever.

For meetings of more than a half-dozen people you'll need a chairperson, to keep the discussion from drifting, and to ensure that everyone gets their say. Having a different chairperson each meeting will spread out a sense of responsibility, and help prevent one or two people from dominating the group.

Write an agenda at the beginning of each meeting, so people can list the subjects they want to talk about. If everyone feels sure that their subjects will be discussed at some point, they will be less likely to try to get into that subject when you are in the middle of discussing something else.

See that some action comes out of every meeting. A youth liberation group in Delaware had meetings for a month, at which people just rambled on about whatever came into their heads, and in four weeks attendance dropped from thirty people to four people. Finally, one person took the initiative to *insist* they decide what needed to be done, and who was going to do what during the week that followed. Some



Meetings are more productive if they result in specific people making a commitment to do certain jobs by a specific time. If you are planning a large student meeting to discuss what to do about a controversial new policy, your planning group might come up with something like this:

Task to be done	Who will do it	Deadline or schedule	How to do it
Make flyers announcing the meeting	Jean, Carol, John	by Tuesday	Include info on time and place, why it is important
Pass out the flyers	Coordinated by John, everybody help	Tuesday after school	Outside school
Make announcements to other student groups	Karen	Mon.-Wed.	
Chair the meeting	Anita	Wed. afternoon	Keep discussion from drifting
Keep record of meeting	Tom	Wed. afternoon	
Prepare action plan	Carl, Laura	Wed. afternoon	discuss with others first
Divide into work grops	Coordinated by Tom,	Wed. afternoon	form groups, get names, choose group coordinator
Report back	new group leaders	after meeting	talk to or call Anita

twenty-five students showed up at the meeting two weeks after that, and all who were interested in taking some kind of action found there was something for them to do.

Most of what is discussed should be of interest to most of the people present. If you are planning a dance to raise money, and three students are working on it, the rest of the people at the meeting don't want to hear a half hour description of how the dance is going, what problems have come up, and what color the tickets are going to be. The dance committee should decide on those things in separate meetings, make a brief report to the rest of the group, and then stop. The same with finances, writing leaflets, and other nitty-gritty stuff.

Most of each meeting should be spent discussing political issues you face, strategies for attacking them, who is going to do what, and seeing

that what was supposed to get done after the last meeting really got done.

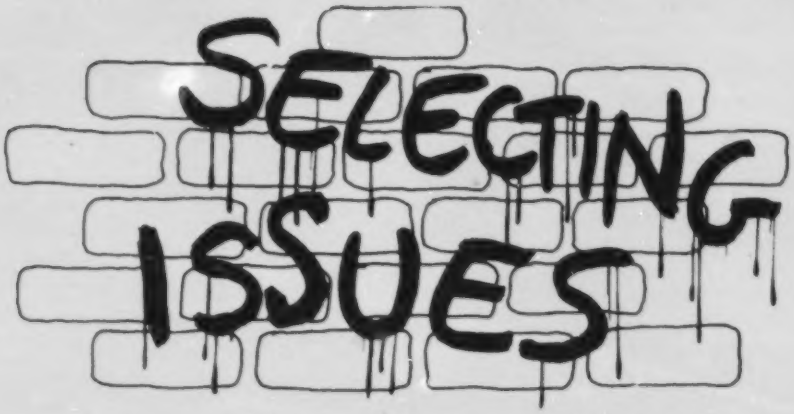
Ask some of the less active people in your group if they think meetings drag on, and what could be done to improve them. One possibility is to set a time limit for the whole meeting, or even for each agenda item. That encourages people to keep things moving. You could also set limits on how long any one person can speak.

Use meetings for political education and discussion. A common problem in youth liberation groups is that members have widely differing degrees of political experience, analysis, etc. Many people who would like to join the group may feel they are too politically inexperienced to fit in. That's especially so if more experienced people keep showing off.

So, you can have meetings where everyone discusses a certain topic. You could discuss different people's feelings about youth liberation; ideas on how schools should ideally be run; how society should be run; ageism in the home or the community; specific political issues like racism, sexism, and upcoming elections, or an international issue; whatever seems appropriate. You could read and discuss a Youth Liberation pamphlet such as this one, or *Unfair to Young People*.

These political discussions might go smoother if someone in the group or an outside speaker first gives a ten-minute speech on the subject, presenting the basic issues involved, and the views held by different people. Remember not to slip into the traditional teacher/student, expert/listener roles.

Before the meeting breaks up, figure out when you need to meet next. Decide who will be responsible for publicizing it and making other arrangements. If you don't already have everyone's phone number and address, get it before they leave, so you can call everyone a day or two before the next meeting to remind them. One good way to end a meeting is to have everyone in the room, in order, say a few things about their impressions of the meeting.



One big problem you will face as an organizer is deciding which issues to concentrate on. There are probably dozens of ways you would like to change your school or community, but if you attack all the problems at once, you will spread yourself too thin and end up being ineffective.

Therefore, before you begin the actual work of organizing, you must establish priorities. In this chapter we discuss factors to be considered when deciding which issues are important. In the next chapter we discuss issues that young people have organized around in the past. You can add your own concerns to that list.

Informal Guidelines

There are many factors to consider when deciding which issues you want to stress. An informal list of guidelines appeared in *A Student's Book*, a student rights and organizing manual published in the early 1970s by the Wisconsin Student Union:

• Your demands should be supported by the masses of students. Developing such demands requires a lot of contact between the organizer and individual students.

• The organizers should take various concerns of the students and formulate them into systematic ideas and demands. For example, certain students smoke and worry about getting caught. Possibly some of them have thought that a smoking lounge would solve their problem. Some students are getting suspended and put in detention just because they can't sit still for six hours a day. Some female students are upset because they are tracked into courses like home economics and typing, while others want to be able to wear jeans. Many students want open campus — being able to go out of the school anytime they don't have classes — and most are bored, dislike school, and can't wait for the weekend. Often, these students will have always accepted the boredom as being inevitable, without ever having questioned whether it's necessary, or whether they like it.

A Common Concern

You and your friends can write down all of these thoughts and analyze them. They probably all fit under one general demand or

concern: self-determination for students, or in other words, the right of students to have a say in their education — democracy. That general demand for self-determination applies to many specific areas: academic subjects, personal appearance, discipline, choice of class, freedom of speech. After you have organized your ideas, go back to the students. Talk to them about the issues, and try to get a sense of which ones they are most concerned about. Some students may even have come up with new ideas, because your activities have gotten them thinking.

Now, when you talk to Juan, the guy who is afraid of getting suspended for smoking in the bathroom, you can compare his lack of self-determination to that of Maryel, who wants to wear jeans in school. You can also talk to both of them about how their problems aren't just in their own heads, but are related to each other, and caused by the same undemocratic system.

Maryel and Juan, and the others you talk to, will probably agree, but shrug and say "So what? There's nothing we can do about it." Here's where your analysis comes in. You can link Maryel and Juan's complaints. Try to show that their individual problems are common to a large group of students, all wanting some form of self-determination.

You won't convince everyone right away. But by using this technique of going back to the students, then systematically formulating their ideas, then going back to the students again and again, the ideas and demands will become more correct and concrete and gather more and more support.

Perspectives on student involvement and activities: It all depends on where you're standing

A report in the May, 1974 **NASSP Bulletin,** (published by the National Association of Secondary School Principals) shows that students, teachers and administrators see things differently when it comes to student activities. Here are the percentages of people in each category who answered **yes** to certain questions.

	Administrators	Teachers	Students
Do activity programs receive active support and cooperation from the school staff?	93	89	55
Are students given opportunities to assist in resolving school issues?	91	78	43
Are activities evaluated periodically by students for the purpose of revising the activities program?	82	70	40
Is membership in school organizations open to all students on a democratic basis?	93	59	52
Does long hair keep a student out of athletic competition?	16	37	71

As increasing numbers of people get concerned about the issue of self-determination in their daily life, the next step is to translate those ideas into action. You will get initial student support when you talk of the need to abolish the dress code, set up a smoking lounge, or institute more relevant courses. But if you are all talk, and no action, people will stop listening to you before too long.

The idea of tying smaller demands together with the demand for democracy is important. If high school organizing groups of the late 1960s had done that when they fought rigid dress codes, they might have been able to transfer their momentum to other areas, instead of falling apart as many groups did after the dress code was changed.

Polling the Students

Another approach to choosing issues, a more formal one, was described in *FPS*:

> "You've probably filled out questionnaires in the past, when other people wanted to get information about you. Why not make up a questionnaire yourselves, to get information about other students? Do they like school? Are there other places that they would rather be? What do they like best? Least? How do they feel about school rules, teachers, classes?"

The first step in polling is to get together with other students who are also interested in organizing. If you know just a couple of others, that's enough. If you know ten or twenty, that's better. You could even start by yourself, hoping that others would join later.

Brainstorming

Discuss some of the broad areas that students might be concerned about. Looking through the next chapter will give you some ideas. Then translate those areas of concern into questions.

This step is most easily done in small groups — no more than five or six people. Figure out questions that will help discover and show others how students feel about issues you've been discussing. Try some brainstorming for a while; write down all the questions that arise. Don't discuss them, just write them down as fast as they come to mind.

Forming Good Questions

After you have your list together, go over it more carefully. Can some questions be combined? Are some more basic than others? Select twenty or twenty-five questions that cover a range of different issues. Maybe you can do the questionnaire for a school project, and get credit for it.

The wording of the questions will affect the answers people give. For example, look at these two questions:

1. Do you think your textbooks are boring and unrelated to what happens in the real world?
2. Do you think your textbooks do a good job of presenting the material covered in class?

These questions both ask about the quality of textbooks. They both could

get a "yes" response, but would mean different things.

One way to avoid this problem is not to use "yes-no" questions. Instead try a format like this:

1. How interesting are your textbooks?

not interesting 1 2 3 4 5 very interesting

Students circle "1" if they feel strongly that texts are boring, "2" if they sort of feel that way, and so on to "5" if they feel texts are very interesting. This type of questionnaire allows you to get more information out of each question.

You can also ask some "open-ended" questions, where students fill in their own answers. These are harder to tabulate, but they work well for questions like "What courses would you like to take that aren't available?" and "What changes would you like to see made in this school?"

When you have come up with a good questionnaire and have had it printed you'll need to figure out how to get it distributed. Unless your school is very small, it's easiest to distribute the questionaire to a representative sampling of students.

Use Repression to Your Advantage

If you can pass it out in homerooms, or in a required course, (or maybe as part of a class project), where students fill them out and you collect the questionaires on the spot, that's best. Otherwise, you can pass them out in the halls, and after school, listing a locker number or a few well-known students or teachers to whom they can be returned.

In many schools, when the principal discovers that you are polling student opinion, she will forbid you to do it. Don't let that stop you. Just distribute the questionaires to students informally — at lunch or after school — and have them returned directly to you. Your sample won't be perfectly representative, but it will still be useful. In addition, the principal's refusal to let you measure student opinion is an excellent organizing issue in itself, one that large numbers of students will probably support.

There are two ways to tabulate the answers. First, if you used the 1-5 scale, find out the *average* answer by adding up all the numbers circled, and dividing the sum by the number of answers.

Now, *look at how spread out the different answers are.* If half the students mark "1" on a certain question, and half mark "5", the average will be the same as on a question where everyone marked "3". Yet, in the first case, people feel strongly about the question and are divided on it; in the second case, they seem to agree generally with each other and do not feel too strongly.

When interpreting the results, keep in mind that many different factors will affect the answers you get. One important factor is that many students may never before have really questioned their textbooks, classes, or their teachers. They may mark down that they are satisfied with certain things without really giving the question much thought.

Comparison

Generally, you won't find wide variation, or extreme opinion, on many

Four student newspapers find student concerns

After talking with several students at three San Francisco high schools, I found out some common problems they have with their counselors.

- Counselors are often out during their listed office hours.
- Unless students are aggressive about getting into classes that are already filled, they are out of luck.
- Counselors don't get a chance to know most of their students. (When they have over 300 counselees, it's not surprising.)
- When students come to counselors about personal difficulties with teachers, the only alternitive that is offered is usually to transfer them out, not deal with the teacher directly.

Right now, it seems to me that students could do some of the jobs that counselors are supposed to do to begin to deal with some of these problems. Students get work experience credit and responsibility at school through doing office work, operating the switchboard, working in the library and resource centers, and being teachers' assistants. It seems to me that they could be counselors' assistants to figure out credits needed, talk to students sympathetically about their problems, work out good alternatives for students when certain classes aren't available, and try to understand and solve personal conflicts between students and teachers before they get too big.

by Jennifer Allen,
in Youth Edition, a high school
newspaper in San Francisco

Very suspicious!

Why is Balfour the only ring company which advertises in and appears to be supported by the school? They also seem to be the only company which can sell graduation notices and rents out caps and gowns. Very suspicious! Why are they the only company doing business in the school?

We have received word that a certain group of high-ranking officials in the administration (King Fred the last, Hygiene Dumpling, to name a few) are treated to dinner, cocktails, etc. . . a few times a year. Who pays for this hash? Could it be Hardly Regard from Balfour? Think about it, won't you?

from The Underground Railroad,
a student paper in Covington, Ky.

issues. If you do, of course, those issues should be given special attention. But the major purpose of the questionnaire is to allow you to *compare* student opinion on various issues. For example, the results may show that students are basically satisfied with many aspects of the school. That doesn't mean you should give up. Comparing issues allows you to see that, for example, though students are extremely satisfied with their texts, they are only moderately satisfied with the smoking policy. Or, you may notice that the questionnaires passed out in black studies class indicate much greater dissatisfaction with textbooks. Maybe black students can be organized around the issue of racism in texts, and all students around the issue of a smoking lounge.

Your interpretation of what to do with the results must be creative.

Incidentally, just the fact that you are doing this questionnaire will attract a certain amount of attention. You may find new students who want to work with you.

Once you have a good idea what issues students are most concerned about, either from informal discussions, or from polling, or both, it's time to make some actual selections. There are several criteria to keep in mind:

"I hate gymsuits!" "Gymsuits are ugly!" "They make me feel like a candy cane!" These are some of the comments heard from students about South Park's gymsuits.

For those males reading this, South Park's gymsuits are one piece outfits with red buttons and white striped tops. They cost $6.50 and you **must** have one.

Gymsuits are unnecessary. Even the faculty can give no valid reason for their existence. One teacher who I asked told me that "A gym class looks better when the students are all dressed the same." Is that a good reason to require us to pay $6.50?

The gymsuit rule is not state-wide. In New York City the Board of Education has declared that "students may be required to wear a specific type of clothing (sneakers, shorts) for physical education classes, but they may not be required to purchase a specific gymsuit. Students are to be graded on performance, not appearance."

Why, then, can't South Park girls wear T-shirts and shorts? For someone on a limited budget, they are much better than South Park's gymsuits. After all, where can you wear a gymsuit except to gym?

One final point. Since boys are not required to buy gymsuits, this rule discriminates against girls and should be eliminated.

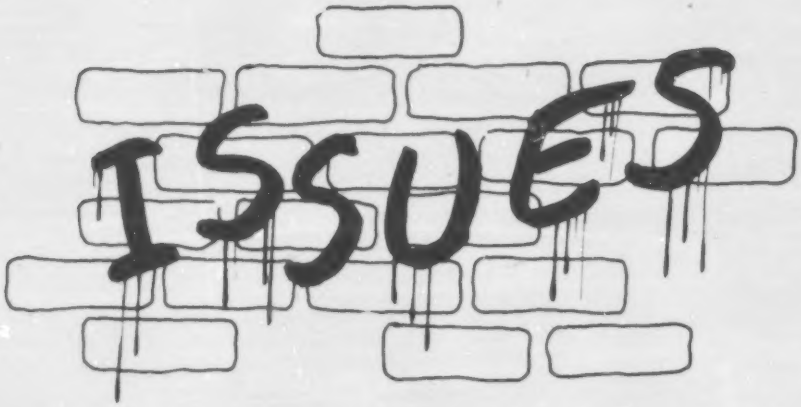
by S. J. in The Probe,
a student paper in Buffalo, N.Y.

Ah! Finally out of that boring English class. I race to my locker and throw my books in, eager to savor today's prime hamburgers and other artificial goodies. I push through the door, my heart pounding, my stomach growling at me for skipping breakfast, my eyes glazed over at the thought of food. But my eyes clear suddenly when I see that line of hungry, drooling students that goes clear to the pop machines.

I realize that at least ten of my precious twenty minutes for "lunch" will be in line. My stomach is now numb with hunger. What could be worse than all this disappointment? My clear eyes catch sight of my boring English teacher who I just escaped. She is walking toward the lunch line. **WHAT!?** Are my eyes playing tricks on me, or do I see her walking past the back of the line and right up to the food? Why is it that I must stand in the back of the line while she can walk right up to the front? Is my extreme hunger making me delirious, or does this remind me of a similar situation that was outlawed several years ago? Does "colored people to the back" sound familiar? As I walk back to my class the bell rings. But I lost my appetite long ago. I imagine a sign on the wall reading: Students to the Back of the Line.

Unsigned, from
Independent Tribune, a high school paper
in Aurora, Colorado

- Your goals should be realistic. Aiming for the impossible is fine for poets, but can be discouraging for student organizers.
- Don't loose sight of all the far-reaching changes that need to be made, but keep your demands, or at least some of them, within the realm of what's possible.
- Choose things that are important and familiar to students, and that have a strong base for support.
- Find issues that can be tied in with longer-range goals. Instead of demanding an end to the dress code, demand that students have a voice in all decisions that affect them. Or, if that seems unrealistic, at least keep tying in the dress code issue with the fact that students have no say in school policy.



The issues and problems you choose to focus on have to be selected by your group, based upon your own school situation. Here we discuss some areas that you might consider; they occur in most schools. Sometimes these are very visible issues, but at other times, or in other situations they lurk beneath the surface.

In most schools and communities ageism is an issue; so are problems of undemocratic control of the school by a small group of adults. Student's rights are constantly violated by school rules that restrict behavior. Problems with teachers and administrators are everyday issues for most students; they also make life miserable for some teachers. Racism, sexism and class discrimination occur throughout our society. It is no wonder that they permeate school life too.

Students who wish to play an active role in dealing with these issues, or with changing the school in other ways, will need to find new resources and to gain access to better school services. In the long run, students need to be part of the group that controls the schools...and it is not always clear just who does control the schools in a community. Grades, sports and other issues may also be important in your school and community.

These are the kinds of issues we discuss on the following pages. In each case we try to talk about the issues in some detail, and to give you examples of how students in other schools have tried to organize for change. But don't be limited by the suggestions here. If the people in your school are really concerned about the limited curriculum, then by all means that's the problem you should start to work on, even though it's not listed here. Use these issues as a guide, not as a limit to what you can do.

Ageism

Age discrimination exists throughout our society. Adults control the major resources of the society and benefit most from the present organization of society. Of course ageism affects the elderly too. People over 65 have trouble finding jobs, and often find themselves cast aside like used machinery. This pamphlet, however, concentrates on ageism as it affects people under age 18, who are denied many of the normal

benefits and privileges of citizenship.

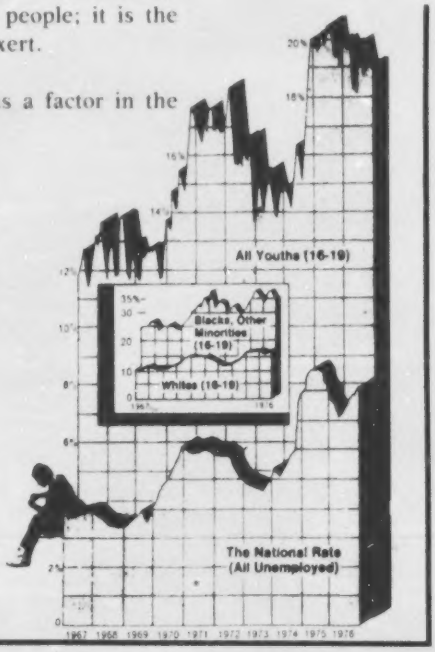
Curfew regulations, driving laws and parents' legal rights all place the young under the firm control of adults. Young people are forced to be students, which keeps them in school and off the job market. The so-called generation gap is not only a conflict among people of different ages; it is a political-economic conflict. Age differences alone do not create the main conflict between older and younger people; it is the economic and political oppression that older people exert.

Ageism in the Community

The chart below demonstrates how potent age is as a factor in the employment market.

Youth unemployment is a National disgrace

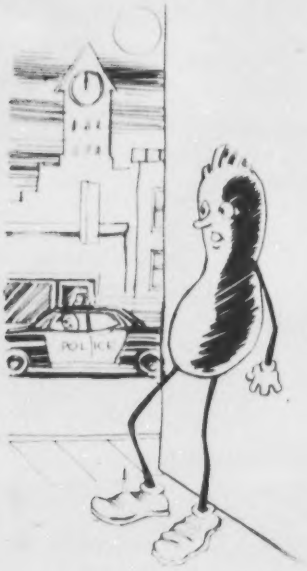
Young people, and non-whites, feel unemployment much more strongly than do other groups. As this chart shows, in 1976 the unemployment rate for young people (ages 16-19) was more than twice the national rate. Nearly one young person in five who was looking for a job in 1976 couldn't find one. Among non-white youths, the rate is even higher: one non-white youth out of every **three** who was looking for a job couldn't find one.


All Youths (16-19)
Blacks, Other Minorities (16-19)
Whites (16-19)
The National Rate (All Unemployed)
1967 1968 1969 1970 1971 1972 1973 1974 1975 1976

Age discrimination takes many other forms. Look at the legal restrictions young people face with regard to drinking, voting, driving, judicial treatment, sexual freedom, and the like. All people below a certain age are either non-employable or economically dependent upon their parents. Everyone below a certain age is required to be in a certain place — school — doing a certain thing for a certain amount of time each day. Some people have argued that the young have a culture all their own, they have their own symbols, their own music, their own fashions and their own values. If this is so, it is partly because young people are denied access to the adult culture. It might be more accurate, though, to say that the so-called youth culture is promoted mainly by certain adults, who can make a lot of money by exploiting it.

Curfews

Some cities forbid anyone under a certain age to be on the street after a certain hour. Exceptions are made for young people who are with adults, or serving adults' needs, (like paper carriers). This is blatant discrimination. The adult community tries to justify these ageist laws by saying that they help control juvenile delinquency, or insure that students are rested to attend school. But it boils down to one more



adult attempt to control the lives of young people.

Trying to abolish curfew regulations by talking to city council members, state representatives, or holding public demonstrations, can make people more aware of adult chauvinism. And adults who rally behind you on this issue may be willing to work with you in the future on other issues.

You can also draw attention to these discriminatory laws by engaging in mass violations. A demonstration of several dozen young people, deliberately violating the curfew in a public place, would be an effective form of civil disobedience. If done carefully, without undue disruption, such protests can help point out to adults the injustice of curfew laws.

One form of age discrimination that is especially obvious and obnoxious is the treatment of young people by some store owners.

Owners of department stores, fast-food restaurants, and especially corner groceries often don't like young shoppers because they feel young people don't spend enough money, discourage adult shoppers, or are likely to rip stuff off. So in many stores you're likely to see signs like "No one under 18 allowed during school hours" or "Maximum 2 students allowed in the store at one time." In other stores, you're allowed to shop, but adults get better service than young people.

Ageism in Stores

There are several things you can do about such treatment. On an individual basis, you can voice your objections any time it occurs; explain to the owner or clerk that you think they are acting unfairly. If that does no good, and you have friends who are also fed up with the store's policy, then consider a boycott or a picket of the store. A group of young people in Washington (see box) had the right idea. They got considerable publicity through their picket.

Ageism at School

In school, special privileges are given to people based on their age. Faculty members get privileges that students do not. And even among students, seniors often have special privileges. It may not be intentional, but the effect of these privileges is to keep students divided. Sophomores envy seniors, and seniors look down on everyone else. Students' closest friends are usually all in the same grade level.

Senior lounges, faculty cafeterias, and other types of formal discrimination can be protested at school board meetings, through one of the methods described in the chapter on tactics. But don't expect to get far; it will be years before school boards recognize ageism as a legitimate issue.

So, you'll have to confront discrimination directly. Pass out leaflets urging teachers and seniors not to make use of their privileges. Or invade those special rooms, preferably in groups. You won't win much support right away, but you will make other students and teachers realize that at least some kids don't like that kind of treatment.

Personal Attitudes

Ageism in school also shows up in personal attitudes, especially the lack of respect students get from teachers. Some teachers do respect

students, but too many don't, and they assume students are unworthy of trust. One result of this lack of respect from teachers is that many students feel their teachers are not interested in their welfare, and are not able to educate in ways that are satisfying, or are not competent.

When students and teachers do not respect or trust each other, the school is held together by the carrots and sticks of grades and punishment, the necessity of a diploma for later jobs and by laws of compulsory attendance. Thus, the state requires attendance and behavior it may not be able to get in other ways.

Dealing with the lack of trust between students and teachers is difficult. You can begin, though, by analyzing the different roles each group plays in the school. *Both* students and teachers feel oppressed, at least some of the time, by the administration and the school board. Even though students and teachers are united by the fact that they both rank

Ageism on the job: two examples

In November, 1974 the Meford (Mass.) Public Library Pages Association formally achieved union status. Its twenty members, aged 13-16, are thought to be the youngest certified union members in the U.S.

The pages decided to unionize because they felt they faced age discrimination. During the summer, right after they won a pay increase (bringing them up to the Federal minimum wage level), the library decided to start hiring older workers and cut back the hours for the younger people.

In October, the group petitioned the Massachusetts Labor Relations Commission to get union status, and on November 27, 1974 they were formally recognized as a bargaining unit. As a result, they can now bargain with the city Manager over wages, hours and working conditions. An AFL-CIO field service director in Washington said that in 36 years of organizing, he's never heard of a group of people that young gaining union status.

We wrote to the Pages Association recently to find out just what they had done. Linda Young, the Secretary, sent the following reply.

In August a group of us pages got concerned because we were going to lose our jobs at the age of 16. We went before the City Council and they voted that we could stay on after 16. We had gotten $1.40 an hour, but then we started getting $1.90. When the pay went up, older people started applying for our jobs.

So the Library cut our hours from ten down to two so the older people could get at least fifteen hours a week. Almost the whole library was in favor of the older pages, and we had nowhere to turn. We then called the discrimination department, but all they could do was give us numbers to call. We called labor relations. The man there, George Doyle, was interested and he let us come in to talk about becoming a union. We signed the papers, took a vote, and then became a union. Now we are bargaining for the things we want. I think this experience gave us a chance to show that kids can do things too.

from FPS

Six high school students have been fired from their non-paying jobs in the Oakland County (Mich.) prosecuter's office because they complained about the way they were treated.

The six were receiving class credit for working in the consumer protection division of the prosecutor's office. But when several minor thefts occured in that office, the students were taken aside and questioned without being advised of their rights, then they were examined under ultraviolet light to see if they had picked up money dusted with a special powder. They were also frisked.

All the students were cleared, but three of them were disgusted with the treatment they received and complained to a local newspaper. At that, the prosecutor fired them. When the remaining students said they agreed with the others' objections, they too were fired.

from FPS

below the administration, they are divided because teachers aren't as low in the hierarchy as students.

Teachers have the most direct power over student behavior, so many students think teachers are the biggest enemy. They aren't. Teachers are in the middle. Their half-way position opens up possibilities for working with them.

If you keep in mind that teachers and students are bound to be divided on many issues, you can still try to relate to some teachers as people; some will be your friends and some won't. When you like a teacher, talk to her about things other than the subject she teaches: problems she runs into with students, the administration and other faculty members, how the school could be run better...you may find you have more in common than you thought. In rare instances, a teacher may help you in your organizing.

In a later section we discuss how to handle teachers who will not change and who continue to treat students with distrust and disrespect.

Democracy Flunks At School

All organizations have rules about how they work and how people should behave. Without such standards life would be chaotic and confusing. In a democratic society, the people who are affected by an organization are assumed to have some say in how that organization operates. And, it is assumed that they have some rights, such as due process, freedom of expression and the like. In most schools these democratic commitments are flouted. Rules and regulations are created by adults alone, and are written into formal codes that govern the behavior of both adults and students.

Rules

Courts have upheld the school's right to set reasonable rules for the conduct of student life. Schools are permitted to set these rules without the consent of students. But schools cannot legally set unreasonable rules, and they cannot make up new rules at the last moment. Schools must notify students ahead of time of the rules and of the punishments for violating the rules.

It is important for you to get a list of all school rules, so you can understand how your school is being run, what you can do and what you can't...or at least what is likely to happen if you violate them.

Some school rules are nonsense. If there are some of this sort in your school, publicizing them may help expose how stupidly repressive the authorities are.

Student Representation

Some schools encourage student governments or student courts to help make school rules and help punish rule offenders. These governments and courts may be helpful in representing student opinion, but if no one is listening to those opinions, representation serves no purpose. If there is a student court or government at your school, find

out if teachers and administrators really pay attention to what they say.

When the administration and the student government disagree, what happens? Is student opinion automatically disregarded? Do student representatives knuckle under to administration pressure?

While it is conceivable that student courts could serve as a progressive force, it is unlikely. Most of them are hoaxes, created by administrators to dupe students into policing each other — doing the administration's dirty work. The only way a student court can have meaning is if its decisions are final, *and* if a student legislature enacts the rules that the court enforces. If the adminstration proposes a student court, or if your school already has one, you can show that it is a farce by organizing around the above issues.

Student representatives to the school board often serve a similar function. The board loses nothing when it allows non-voting students to sit with it. It also gains good publicity in the eyes of many students, who naively believe the board might really listen to what students have to say. Representative boards usually end up as student rubber stamps for administration policy.

Of course, previous bad experiences don't preclude working for student advisory boards. Sometimes students can get elected and use the position as a forum to publicly criticize the board's policies. But when students in one Michigan city tried this tactic, the board severely curtailed their right to speak at the meetings.

Due Process

Federal courts — the same ones that support the schools' power to make rules — agree that students charged with violating school rules must receive "due process," that is, fair and consistent treatment. For instance, students must be informed of the rules and the rule violation, and they must be permitted a hearing to determine guilt — it cannot just be assumed. In a hearing for a serious offense, a student has the right to a lawyer, access to friendly witnesses, a chance to examine hostile witnesses, and the right to an appeal. If you press for these rights you not only help protect yourself, but help move towards a more just and democratic disciplinary system.

Even rule-breakers can insist upon the preservation of their constitutional rights in the administration of school policies. The American Civil Liberties Union has published a book on student rights, and you might want to get a copy (see bibliography). In several cities, students and lawyers have worked together to print leaflets and even small comic magazines. If you monitor the disciplinary system, you will be able to publicize gross breaches of due process and fair treatment. Whether or not you threaten legal action, the attention drawn to unfair practices may cause some changes in administrative procedure.

A Bill of Rights

Developing a comprehensive student bill of rights has enormous advantages over a continuous series of demands, grievances and appeals. A bill of rights provides something concrete to organize around and discuss. It pulls together a wide range of issues, so that all students

Democracy in school is available only on demand — and sometimes it's not available at all

The Chancellor of the New York City school system, Harvey Scribner, is urging that students should have a voice in deciding who their principal is to be. He said he made the proposal because it would help "transform schools into democratic communities of learning."

It sounded good at first, but then he added two more conditions to the proposal. First, it would apply only to high school students—junior high and elementary students are considered too young to be able to hold valid opinions about who is going to tell them what to do. Second, even in the high schools, students would act only in an advisory role, and the final decision would still be made by adults.

Clearly, what Scribner is after is not to give students any real power; he just wants to make it look like things are getting better.

from FPS

A story about birth control written by a 15-year-old student for the Cranston, Rhode Island High East school newspaper, is sending shocks through school authorities.

The article, entitled "Birth Control: Enjoying Sex Without Fear," has prompted the school committee to call for an investigation into the newspaper's policies and into the judgement of the school paper's faculty advisor.

It was written by Avis Gunther, a sophomore. She said she consulted pamphlets and other literature in the school library while preparing the article.

"At this particular stage we are having a total review of the roles particular individuals played in the preparation of the story. If students are to take responsibilities, they should be according to the rules," school superintendent Dr. Joseph Picano said.

Picano said that there was a certain amount of "editorializing" in the story and said that "at this point I can't say for sure" what action would be taken against the students involved and the adviser. However, he said he was not inclined to have them suspended.

from the Intellectual Freedom Newsletter

In Detroit, a federal judge handed down a "Uniform Code of Student Conduct", which denied many of the rights and freedoms advocated in this pamphlet. Students in the high schools responded to his action in the following ways:

- They got together (from several schools and regions) to draw up their own version of a Code — a Bill of Rights.
- They wrote to the judge and the School Board with a detailed description of their objections to the Code.
- They planned to meet with friendly Board members to discuss further actions.
- They joined forces with several parents' groups in the community to draw in the media, hold conferences, and otherwise inform the entire community of the problems with the Code.
- They publicized ways in which school administrators were already violating the judge's Code.
- White and black students and parents formed an inter-racial coalition to work on this Code.

Who are America's book banners and burners? A survey by the **Newsletter on Intellectual Freedom** reveals that school boards, principals, superintendents and libraries lead the list; they are responsible for initiating more censorship actions than any other group. Typical cases involve a school board member or superintendent presenting "objectionable materials" to the board, which then votes to remove them. Library censorship was included because controversies involving school libraries heavily outweighed those concerning public libraries.

Censorship cases were also analyzed to determine the "point of controversy" in censorship disputes. Again, the schools ranked at the top of the list. Objections regarding school libraries and curriculum materials were raised more often than any others. If you combine them with the second most common "point of controversy," student publications, there are almost three times as many school-related censorship cases as any other type. It is ironic that the institution entrusted with teaching the First Amendment is working so hard to subvert it.

will find something that concerns them. You can compare the need for a bill of rights 200 years ago with the need for a student bill of rights today.

As you develop and use a bill of rights, you must have mass support from the student body. Student support is important for all demands, of course, but is especially necessary for a bill of rights. Try to involve as many students as possible, representing all different interests and cliques in the school, in the writing and proposing of the student bill of rights. Once you've made a formal proposal, don't let it be delayed, sent to committee, or discussed for a long drawn out period. Require the administration to respond by a certain deadline. Alert other groups to your work so they can help keep the pressure on the school. And don't meet privately with officials on this issue. A document designed to govern your public life should be negotiated in public.

The points to be made in a bill of rights will be similar in most schools. Therefore, instead of starting from scratch to establish a bill for your school, look at the example in the Appendix first. You can alter it to meet your needs. Then share your final result with students in other schools. The more the idea spreads, the more students will have some protection from their rulers.

The First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the rights of free speech and free press. However, educators consistently violate these rights, on the grounds of maintaining order.

In 1969, the Supreme Court issued it's famous *Tinker* ruling, in which it said that high school students have the right to freedom of expression as long as they do not "materially and substantially interfere with the requirements of appropriate discipline in the operation of the school." School officials, according to this, can't stop you from distributing your leaflets or underground papers on campus unless you are really being disruptive.

That doesn't mean they won't try. If they do, you may decide that before you can do much other organizing, you'll have to get your First Amendment rights clearly recognized.

You should be able to get a certain amount of support from the adult community on this. First, you can quote the Bill of Rights, and the *Tinker* decision in your defense. Talk to the editors of your local newspapers — they may see this as a clear case of free speech, and come out on your side.

In New York City a group of students who faced this problem printed the First Amendment on a leaflet, and passed it around school. The administration told them to quit passing it, or they would be suspended. They refused, the principal suspended them, and the school got terrible publicity because it had suspended students for passing out copies of the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

Dress Codes

If your school still has a dress code, it will probably seem like a natural issue to organize around. The courts have generally ruled against all but the most fundamental dress regulations (like requiring students to wear

shoes, for health reasons). Students will give strong support to a campaign against the dress code. The administration, if it backs itself into a corner, will end up losing much of its credibility in the community.

But there are dangers. Organizing around just dress codes puts you in a highly cooptable position. It may divert students' attention from larger and more fundamental issues. The administration can easily repeal the dress code, giving itself a "nice" image, and where does that leave you? You can wear long hair and jeans, but your organizing base may be destroyed.

We suggest that you get a build a strong base for your organization, focus on several other issues first, and discuss the issue of cooptation (see page 84) before you decide to fight the dress code.

Smoking

Most high schools don't allow students to smoke on school grounds. One justification is that smoking presents a fire hazard. Another is that it's bad for students' health.

We do not advocate smoking; it is a dangerous habit. However, it is age discrimination to punish students who smoke while permitting adults to do so. This is one more situation where the school, trying to force its values on students, enforces discriminatory rules.

The blatant character of this discrimination, plus the large numbers of students who do smoke and are inconvenienced, make it a good issue to organize around. Lots of students would sign a petition, hand out leaflets, attend mass meetings, or deliberately and publicly violate the no-smoking ordinance. Even if the school will not formally allow smoking, enough protest could convince local authorities to overlook it.

Working With the Staff

Relationships between students and educators reflect the ageism of the rest of society. Most teachers and principals feel they must control young people, and that they aren't accountable to students. Usually they have been trained to think this way, and never considered doing things differently. Students can try making the staff more accountable by demanding a voice in the process of hiring and evaluating teachers and administrators.

Hiring

In most schools, teachers are selected without any input by parents, community members or teachers — and especially not students. These decisions usually are made by the principal or the superintendent's staff. As a result, many teachers who are selected may seem good to the adult educators, but may have little competence as far as students are concerned. In addition, some folks who might be good at working with young people are dumped because of the adults' concerns for control of students' lives.

The first step is to find out how teachers are hired now. Most school systems have explicit application forms prospective teachers must fill

What the Schools do to teachers

The school system destroys many, many children. But just as important, it destroys most teachers. It does not care about teachers any more than it cares about children. It does not help teachers achieve any more than it helps children achieve. The system engulfs the hopeful, energetic, often idealistic young teachers. It rapidly dehumanizes them, squeezing and twisting warmth and compassion out of them, turning them into non-thinking machines which obey and enforce automatically the rules and regulations of the bureaucracy.

Ellen Lurie,
in How to Change the Schools

out. Check these forms to be sure they are fair, do not show racial or sexual discrimination, and ask questions that are genuinely relevant to being a good teacher. Once you know the board's procedure, you can begin to figure out how and where you want to fit in.

Do you know what kinds of teachers you want? Most students have only a vague sense of what makes a good teacher, though they can certainly recognize one when they see one. Try to make a checklist of qualities you want. It might include:

- respect for students as people
- willingness to bend the curriculum to suit students' desires
- ability to talk with students freely
- desire to learn as well as teach
- ability to work with women as well as men, and third-world students as well as whites
- committment to work in a school and community such as yours

If you are able to get a good list together, present it to school administrators or community groups. Explain that you want to have representatives interview all possible teachers. Then you'll be in a position to push for those teachers you prefer.

You may have to organize demonstrations to get the right to be part of hiring. Estimate how much student backing you have. Can you convincingly threaten to boycott the classes of any teachers chosen without student involvement? Or will you have to be content with something less ambitious?

As students try to gain some say in hiring, remember that parents and community groups are also excluded from this process. Work with them. You may be at the start of a student-community coalition to influence the closed system of professional education.

Student Evaluation

Student evaluations of teachers can accomplish two things: first, they can help you get rid of truly rotten teachers before they get tenure; second, they can help all teachers, tenured and untenured, improve their skills *if they want to* by telling them what students view as their

strong and weak points. Student evaluations can help teachers make significant changes in their approach.

You cannot assume that principals or other teachers will do this evaluation for you. You'll probably have to take the initiative.

Think carefully about what qualities you want to evaluate. There is a difference between popularity and effectiveness. Some teachers get along well with everyone — they're funny, friendly, approachable, and so forth. These are valuable qualities, but they're not all you need to be an effective teacher. Other teachers are good at helping students learn, yet their methods are brutal or arrogant. So, effectiveness by itself also is not a sufficient criterion for a good teacher. A good teacher must combine these two qualities.

Take your time and be sure you develop a questionnaire that will be effective. Include a variety of items: ask about many aspects of a teacher's popularity and effectiveness. And get responses from a large and representative group of students. Don't be vulnerable to school charges that you are using a biased and unfair process.

Evaluation forms can be printed as simple checklists, with students answering "yes" or "no" or "how often" to various questions, or they can be done like the survey described in Chapter V. They can be printed

A TEACHER REPORT CARD: If they grade us, we should be able to grade them too.

We are not doing this because we like grades. In fact, we hate them. When teachers can stop grading us, we'll stop grading them.

In the meantime, perhaps the grades will provide some kind of discussion between teachers and students about their relationships and teaching and learning methods. Perhaps the grades will wake up a few teachers to what they are doing for, and to, the students, in the opinion of the students. Perhaps the report card will convince a few more teachers of the foolishness of grades of any kind. In order to do any of these things, the grades you give must be based on valid criteria.

In grading teachers, ask yourself these questions:

- Did you learn anything from this teacher that made enough of an impression to stick (besides petty facts)?
- Did you find yourself involved and enjoying the class?
- Was the teacher boring enough to make you goof-off, go to sleep, get sick, etc.?
- Did the teacher stick strictly to the book?
- Was the teacher power-tripping at the expense of the students?
- Was the classtime used for learning, or just for busywork?
- Were assignments bullshit?

Please base your grades on these criteria so this will be as valid as possible. Grade only teachers you had last semester.

Teacher	Grade

from a student paper in Saratoga, California

in leaflet fashion or inserted as an ad in the school newspaper, to be cut out and returned to your group. As with other leaflets, no one can prevent their distribution if you do it properly.

In some schools, students have been able to cooperate with the administration in an evaluation procedure that is financed and supported by the school itself. That is the easiest way, but it may mean you have to compromise on certain items. You should decide in advance how you want to use the results, who will see them, and whether they will be publicly available. Do not permit them to remain in the control of the administration.

If student evaluations of some teachers are really low and if those teachers refuse to change, consider trying to get rid of them. Collect evidence of discrimination, reports of poor teaching, observations of inappropriate punishment, and anything else that may be necessary. The teacher, like everyone else, is entitled to a fair hearing, where she can hear the charges and complaints. But if the school refuses to permit this, and does not respond to your data, you may have to go further and demand dismissal. A selective boycott of one teacher's class for instance, makes it clear to the public at large that you are boycotting one incompetent teacher and not just having a fling at not going to classes.

As long as the school is an oppressive, controlling, uncomfortable institution, all teachers will have trouble doing good jobs regardless of how much they want to. So, put your evaluation in the context of what's possible within the school system. No matter how effective your evaluation is, changing or improving a few teachers will not alter the basic problems of adult power and control in the school. However, it may put adults on notice that they must work with students or suffer the consequences.

Feedback for the Principal

Influence on the hiring and evaluation of teachers can easily be extended to the principal as well. In some ways this may be easier to accomplish, since community groups often interview candidates for the position of principal.

One important quality for principals is a strong record in student rights, and leadership in efforts to improve teaching.

Guidance Counselors

Counselors are supposed to help guide and aid students whenever they have questions or trouble. There are often some good counselors who really help students with their troubles, and help them deal with teachers, jobs, drugs and so on. But many counselors cannot be trusted to help students, and are really trying to help the school maintain order and control. Be careful about the information you give counselors, unless you are sure of them. Although it may be hard to get rid of them without lots of proof, they lose a lot of their clout if they are discredited in the eyes of students.

Evaluations of counselors should carry great weight, since students' subjective opinions of them definitely indicate how well they can carry out their jobs.

Classism and Tracking

Whatever the Declaration of Independence may promise, all Americans are *not* treated as if they were created equal. Our society is composed of several layers, or classes; while some people do move from one class to another, which class you are born into has a major influence on your entire life — it affects what kinds of people you know, what kind of work you do, how much money you make, and how much control you have over your own life and the lives of other people.

These different social classes are not sharply defined; many people do not clearly fall into one specific class. Certain useful distinctions can be made, though.

At the top, in terms of power and money, are the few people who sociologist C. Wright Mills called "the power elite." They own or control the large corporations; through both direct and indirect means they exercise vast influence over the government; they control newspapers, TV, and other media, thus determining what information and ideas people receive — in short, they are the ruling class. They have a lot of power and money (the two are closely related), yet most of their income does not come as salaries for the work they do. Rather, it comes from the money they have inherited and accumulated, which they use for business and financial investments. (In 1966, individuals who earned over $100,000 received 80.1% of their income, as a whole, from capital investments and small businesses; they earned only 15.2% as salaries. Individuals who earned under $20,000 got only 11.8% of that income, as a whole, from capital investments and small businesses; they earned 87%as salaries and wages.)

Outside of this ruling class are all the rest of us, who have little or no control over corporations and the government and other institutions, and who, having little or no money to invest, have to earn the money we need to live on. Again, there are no clear divisions, but several general categories can be drawn.

There is the upper-middle class, with well-paying jobs (often in professions like law, medicine, government and academic work), who are comfortable but with only a little influence in corporate or community decision-making. There is the working class, whose members generally do routine work in factories and offices and schools, or dangerous work like mining. And there are many people who are unemployed, on welfare, or who are so poorly paid that they live in poverty conditions.

The Tracking Mechanism

This description of classes and class differences is too short, and it over-simplifies the subject. Nevertheless, it provides a basis for seeing how the class structure of our society affects schools.

As our society is now, there are a large number of uninteresting, low-paying, alienating jobs. Somebody has to fill them. Not surprisingly, most parents would like their children to get important, well-paying, influential jobs. But only members of the ruling class actually have the

The struggle against tracking can unite rich and poor, black and white. But it can't be won until the schools cease to serve the rich.

Training for Roosevelt High begins before you even enter. In the ninth grade just before you graduate to Roosevelt, the counselor comes and asks kids what things they would like. He asks, "Do you like wood?" And the kids say yes. "And do you like electricity? Drafting?" Again, yes. "Well, I think you ought to take a shop major."

They never give you a math major or a science major if you want one. Only if they think you are exceptional do you get this type of major. There are a lot of smart kids there, but they are all in business majors and stuff like that. From the beginning they tell you that you are not going to college anyway. So you are programmed into not going to college.

To those who run Roosevelt we are dumb. But to many of us, it's the teachers who don't know what they are doing. I visited a class called Algebra S. The kids are smart, but they are stuck in Algebra S which means slow learner. The guy teaches the class like it was kindergarten. "This is a new word. The lowest common factor." Stuff like that. Talking to the kids like they were third graders. They even had to read aloud. There are a lot of teachers like that. We don't have too many Chicano teachers, most of them are white.

Organizing against tracking in the high schools is of the highest degree of importance. Dress codes, open campuses, even constitutional rights are demands that can be won without the school system changing its true purpose or losing its effectiveness. These demands can be won or lost without the people involved in the struggle achieving a real understanding of how schools relate to and serve capitalist society.

Tracking is an issue that cannot be won until society and government cease to serve the rich. Since it cannot be won without an overall revolution, the purpose of organizing against tracking must be to educate students and parents as to how schools, government and society are all controlled by the rich to serve the rich.

Changes in schools usually cannot be brought about by students alone. Even a minor furor over a dress code, changes are not made without some support from teachers or parents. Tracking would bring the involvement of parents, they could relate to the issue as having a direct effect upon their lives. Students would be compelled to form more than temporary coalitions. They would understand that changes that affect society must be made by the masses.

In racially torn schools, organizing against tracking can and has served as a means of uniting the races. For whites to support the demands of blacks in a school will help break down the opposition to coalition work is high among blacks. Tracking is an issue that is more than a moral issue to whites. They suffer from tracking, the same as blacks. They would have a real interest in the struggle and would be likely to make their support more than paper support as in the case of most white support of black demands.

by Scott Craig,
a student in Flint, Michigan

power to insure that their children get such positions. Children from the less-powerful middle classes generally get jobs similar to what their parents had — well-paying, but not on a level with the ruling class. Poor and working class children then get whatever jobs are left — if, indeed, they can find anything. Although there are some exceptions, few people would deny that this is the general trend.

This process of parents passing their class position on to their children occurs in several ways. Many times, children directly inherit money and corporate positions from their parents. Even without a formal inheritance, children pick up their parents' attitudes, expectations and skills,

and this tends to perpetuate class divisions from one generation to another.

Schools could try to overcome these class divisions. Instead, schools actually encourage them. The most important way they do this is through what is called the tracking system.

In school, upper-class kids are taught to make decisions for other people, go to college, make money, and be a part of the ruling class. Middle-class kids are prepared to work responsibly and productively within limits set by some higher authority. Poor kids are prepared for just about nothing, which leaves them little choice except to remain poor.

Tracking takes place both between one school and another, and within individual schools. It's most noticeable between schools. People from different economic classes live in different neighborhoods, and each neighborhood has it's own school. Since schools get much of their budgets from local taxes, the schools in poor areas can't spend as much as those in middle-class neighborhoods (or must pay a higher tax rate). The richest kids go to expensive private schools, where they can get to know their future corporation buddies and girl friends or boy friends.

In addition to this tracking by neighborhood, there is tracking within each school. Most schools have different "programs" for different students; college prep, vocational prep, and general studies. With some exceptions, students wind up in one or another of these tracks, based on their race and/or their parents' income. There is little choice involved. (Which track are you in? Did anyone ever sit down with you and discuss the various possibilities, and ask which you preferred? Or was it just assumed all along that this was the track for you?)

Teachers find out what track a student is in and think of that student accordingly. If you're in a college track, they expect you to do well; if you're in a vocational track, they'll be content with less. Thus, tracking becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy: even if there is no difference in the student's ability to begin with, there will be a difference by the time they finish school.

It's hard to organize around tracking, because most people aren't aware of just how it works. Your first job will be to read about tracking in general. Back issues of FPS and other magazines and books about radical educational thought can help. Then look at how tracking works in your school. Talk to students from all tracks. How much did they have to say about being put into their track? Would they rather be doing something else? Do they feel they're treated differently by teachers, administrators, and counselors because of the track they're in?

You're likely to get support from students who are in vocational and general tracks, and don't like it, and from their parents. They're the ones who feel the bad effects of the tracking system. When you feel you can demonstrate that a tracking system does exist in your school, and that it does discriminate against students because of their race, sex, or economic and social class backround, then you're ready to do something

about it. Look over the chapter on choosing strategies, and decide what action to take.

Racism

There are two basic kinds of racism. Individual racism refers to personal thoughts or acts of racial superiority and disrespect. Individual racism may exist as a belief that white students are better than or smarter than others, or ignorance about other races and cultures. It can be seen when whites discriminate against others in clubs, parties, athletics, etc. Changing individual racism requires making information about different races and cultures available, and having communication and experiences with others that challenge prejudicial attitudes. It also means understanding that the common interests of most white and black people far outweigh their differences. Most student organizing efforts (or any organizing effort, for that matter) would be more effective if black and white and brown students were united in fighting for the same demands.

Institutional racism refers to things that happen within organizations because of the way they are structured. Institutional racism may be harder to see; it may appear as a lack of equal educational opportunity for non-whites, tracking, barriers to fair employment, restricted housing patterns, or lower incomes for minorities. Generally, no one person is responsible for this situation and no one person can abolish it. Changes in institutional racism involve altering the basic structures of groups and organizations.

Racism not only affects those people who face discrimination, it also affects members of the so-called majority group. If minorities are at a disadvantage, then white people are privileged — simply because of their skin color. This often leads many whites to assume they are superior when that has no basis in fact. Sometimes it makes whites arrogant, falsely complacent, and undemocratic.

Racism in Schools

Institutional racism in schools can take many forms, some obvious, others hidden. It can be found in the curriculum and textbooks, among the faculty and the student body, in relationships among students, in the counseling system, and in the rules and the way they are enforced.

Finding and Combatting Racism

If you are going to organize on these issues you can start by looking for further evidence of racism. What is the racial makeup of your student body? If your school is mostly white or mostly black, what does that tell you about racism in the school or community? What is the racial composition of your faculty? What is the suspension rate for whites versus non-whites? If there is a difference, talk to students in your school to find out why. What are the attitudes of faculty members towards minority students?

Organizing around racism is hard if your school is all white. White

Indian History

What do your school books tell you about President Andrew Jackson's Indian policy?

After Congress passed the Indian Removal Act in 1830, more than 125,000 Indians were dragged from their homes and deported west of the Mississippi by military force. Jackson's treaties with the Indians — there were 94 in all — were masterpieces of bribery, threats, force and fraud. Indians were hunted down like animals, bound as prisoners, put in concentration camps. One third of those Indians died in moving.

• summarized from **Chronicles of Indian Protest**, Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1971

Black History

Do you read about slavery from a slave's viewpoint? Here is what ex-slaves told a Yankee teacher in a Kentucky school for freed blacks during Reconstruction:

Teacher: "Now children, don't you think white people are better than you because they have straight hair and white faces?"

Pupils: "No sir."

Teacher: "No, they are no better but they are different, they possess great power, they formed a great government, they control this vast country. Now what makes them better than you are?"

Pupils: "Money." (Unanimous shout.)

Teacher: "Yes, but what enables them to obtain it? How did they get the money?"

Pupils: "Got it off us, stole it off us — all!"

• quoted in **American Missionary X**, 1866

If you attend a desegregated school, this quiz will help grade your school on its equal education efforts. If you attend a segregated school — for minorities or whites — this quiz will tell you if you have an equal chance for quality education.

Curriculum

Do you learn how whites control many institutions and communities at the expense of minorities?

Are all students assigned to read newspapers and magazines that give the minorities' point of view?

Has your class discussed the irony of our Declaration of Independence being prepared by slaveowners?

Are minority parents and educators consulted in effective use of multi-racial instruction materials?

Teachers

Do your teachers respect cultures and life-styles different from their own?

Do teachers expect equal academic effort by minority students?

Are minority teachers given positions of authority in the school?

Are racism awareness workshops for teachers held regularly at school?

Do teachers treat racial discrimination as society's problem rather than as a "black problem?"

Students

Are minority students encouraged to "be themselves" even if different from most of their fellow students?

Where there is ability grouping, do students in the lower groups regularly advance into higher groups?

Do students take active part in discussion and debate of minority rights issues?

Puerto Rican History

Do your school books tell you the full story of Operation Bootstrap? Here is a review of 12 recent supplementary readers on Puerto Rican history:

All the books accept the phase of U.S. economic policy called Operation Bootstrap as a glowing success. Unmentioned are such realities as these: Eighty percent of the Puerto Rican economy is now controlled by U.S. corporations. Puerto Rico must now import more than ninety percent of the goods it consumes; prices are higher in Puerto Rico than in New York or most other American cities. Yet one quarter of all Puerto Rican families live on $1.37 a day. The prosperity that all the American history books write about just is not there."

• from **Distortions and Omissions in Children's History Books**

Chicano History

Do you read that there were thriving towns in California and Texas long before Anglo-Saxon pioneers arrived?

Textbook after textbook supports the notion that the early settlers of the Southwest — the Spanish and Indian and mixed-blood pioneers who came from Mexico, as well as Indians native to the region — wandered around in confusion until the Anglo-Saxon pioneer, with his superior wisdom and clearer vision, vaulted the Rocky Mountains and brought order out of chaos.

• from **The Excluded Student**, a U.S. Commission of Civil Rights report, 1972

School Board

Does the school board have an organized program to overcome racism in the school district?

Does the school board speak publicly in behalf of integration in housing, employment, and other areas?

Are school administrators drawn from all minority groups represented in the school district?

Does the school board reflect the economic make-up of the community it serves?

Parents and Community

Do all parents, regardless of race and economic background, feel welcome at your school?

Do guidance counselors and school psychologists have evening schedules for daytime working parents?

Does the community have control over finances, hiring, curriculum, and policy decisions in the district?

Racism rating — test your school. If it flunks, pass out the results on a leaflet, and demand action.

Racism is usually pronounced in suspension statistics

SUSPENSION AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL ENROLLMENT, 1971-72

The racism of the school is usually evident in disciplinary procedures such as suspensions. The figures below demonstrate that black students in one urban school district were suspended more than twice as often as white students. Mexican-Americans were also suspended more than whites.

	Suspensions	Total enrollment	Percentage
Blacks	10,050	57,174	17.5
Whites	5,873	85,485	6.0
Mexican-Americans	1,894	15,154	13.2

from the **Inequality in Education** report, Dallas, 1975, p. 37

As a child growing up in a primarily all-white neighborhood, my experiences in grade school and the interaction I had with all of my school friends geared me, even at that early age, to mold my attitudes and personality to making myself acceptable to the majority of those around me. Although I was unaware of my accommodating characteristics, as I look back and re-evaluate my actions I can pick out quite a few instances when I went out of my way to become accepted.

As I sit back I think of all the times that I'd my face and color of my skin so that the other students would accept me as a friend, someone to have fun with. I denied myself my own culture in trying to be "one of my friends" to the point where I knew more about my white friends, "my" white forefathers, and "my" white country than I knew about my Filipino heritage and how it applies to me as a Pinay in this country.

All during junior high and high school I was attacted to white movie stars, acid-rock bands, and especially blond-haired, blue-eyed males. I remember often times telling my friends (white) that I had an Asian boyfriend but that I'd prefer a blond-haired, blue-eyed boyfriend. But even though my preferences were for white males, I always found myself with an Asian. How drastically can time and experience change one's mind!

Then finally, when I was a 10th grader in high school, things began to pop up in my mind and I started to question many of my own attitudes toward people who look just like myself. As I began to define terms such as discrimination, I saw I was stereotyping my own people. I found that I was a victim under those categories. People (society) were stereotyping me and I, in turn, was stereotyping my own people. I was told that I was supposed to be quiet, passive, hard-working, good partier, good dancer, a bad lay, etc.—the whole bit. And the bad thing about that—I believed them and I applied those ideas to all Asian people.

The more I became involved and aware of these derogatory terms being slapped on me and the more I began to translate my own attitudes, the angrier I got. And it was through this anger that I found myself a mentally healthier and stronger Asian sister. I feel very capable of carrying out commitments to myself and to my people with courage and persistence. For too long we have been raped of our own values and own self-pride.

My own strength is the people's strength and my brothers' and sisters' strength is mine. Hopefully all will help each other to correct the injustices played on us, sharing our experiences, our knowledge, our love for each other.

Makibake—Huwag Mataket!!

Anonymous, reprinted from Asian Face, a high school paper in San Diego

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Under existing conditions, this is what Mexican-American young people may expect as they enter public schools in the Southwest:

- Their language and culture will be excluded;
- Schools to which they are assigned will be underfinanced;
- Teachers will treat them less favorably than Anglo pupils;
- Forty percent of them will drop out of school before graduation and those who remain in school will achieve less than their Anglo classmates.

Summary of findings by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights

people, the beneficiaries of racism, are not usually turned on by attempts to understand or give up their undeserved privileges. But some may be. And in a racially mixed school this may be a hot issue. When white and black students must deal with each other every day, white people can't ignore racism as easily. Third-world people are also more likely to see how they're being screwed in school, and to act on it.

For example, black students in one Ohio school got together several years ago to fight three teachers who were treating them unfairly. First, several black students met to talk over issues and to figure out how to document their feelings. They collected evidence from other students — black and white — who saw unfair disciplinary actions, rudeness towards blacks and unfair grading by teachers. They put the complaints into a leaflet, together with the names of the offensive teachers, and tried to read it at one of the school's general assemblies. The assistant principal in charge of the assembly stopped the reading, and ended the assembly when a large number of black students began to hoot and cheer. The blacks then walked out of the school and a hundred of them marched to the central city school board. On their way they passed two other schools. There they also distributed their leaflets and asked other black students to join them in their orderly march downtown. Their walkout, and the fact that students from other schools joined them, forced the board to begin paying attention to racism in its staff and instructional procedures. But that attention was quickly dissipated, since it was not followed up by other protests or work for change.

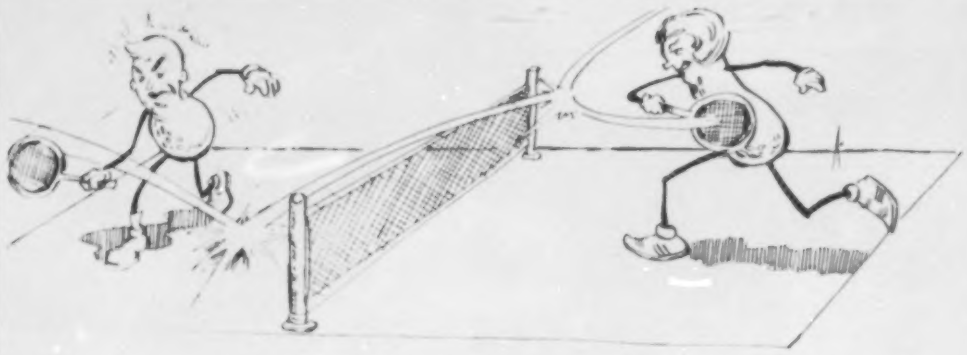
In some cities and regions, the issues of racism involve hispanic people (Mexican-Americans, Puerto Ricans or Cubans) instead of or in addition to blacks. Asian Americans and native Americans are also the victims of racism.

Sexism

Sexist educational practices are rapidly being challenged in schools around the country. The feminist movement has inspired many school-aged women to raise women's issues in the classroom.

Institutional sexism is obvious and widespread. For example, female teachers predominate in elementary schools, male teachers in the high schools. Males overwhelmingly fill administrative positions as principals, deans, and superintendents.

Sexism is maintained by teaching young people that males and females have very different sex roles. Schools can no longer (legally) require males to take only shop classes and females to take home economics. But generally because of parental pressure, advice from counselors, and friends' ideas, those are the courses that students end up taking. Gym classes and sports are rarely co-ed, partly because of the feeling that women shouldn't engage in body-contact sports, and partly to protect male egos. One way to draw attention to this discrimination is to start integrating the classes, ignoring all rules and class lists.



Sexism in Little League . . . . and in tennis

A nine-year-old girl who attends a public Los Angeles elementary school has tried unsuccessfully to get on the Little League team. She was given a notice at school saying that children aged nine to twelve could sign up for teams. So she did.

Six weeks later, her mother was informed by a Little League official that according to the rules, girls may not play Little League ball. This is not discrimination, the official said. It is the rules. And after all, "baseball is a man's game."

Another official agreed that it was not discrimination. His reason was that "We in recreation have had a number of years of college," and therefore "know that girls should not play baseball with boys."

Although Little League is a private organization it makes extensive use of public facilities to get players. The girl's mother urged that the City Council bar organizations which practice discrimination on the basis of race, religion, or sex from making use of public facilities. "This type of discrimination would not be tolerated if it were leveled against black, yellow, or Chicano males," she said, "but in our society, it is still all right to uphold rules against females."

from FPS

"Mixed doubles in tennis can do less damage to a young girl's body than to an adolescent boy's ego."

"A high school boy, beaten at a game of tennis by a girl his own age, would feel castrated."

"But the real problem in coed high school varsity tennis would be the ego of the young man."

"While it's difficult for an adolescent boy to take a beating from a male peer, he learns to accept and even overcome it.

"But if he should take a real walloping from a girl his age, why then, we very often see a true withdrawal from sports altogether, and a variety of psychosomatic disorders that he'll develop to keep from returning to the game."

from comments of various "experts" on a proposal before the Prince Georges, Md., school board for coeducational tennis, Washington News, March 11, 1971

If you decide to organize against sexism in the schools, try to unite with any women's liberation groups in your community. They can help you out in doing research, finding resources, and getting a good turn-out at school board meetings. It's a good chance for students to begin working with others in the community around problems that concern both groups.

There are many areas you could focus on. Find out how much money is spent on women's sports as compared to men's; if there is a difference, find out why. Does your school still have classes that are

required for one sex, but not for the other? Do counselors urge women students to take home economics, and men to take shop or science? If certain teachers are sexist in their remarks or actions, make a concrete list of some of the things they've done, then confront them with it. If they won't try to change, then go to the school board and the community and demand that they change or be fired. (Before going this far, be sure your evidence is substantial, serious, and that you have several witnesses.)

Gayness and Sexism

Another form of sexism, one that is particularly blatant, is the repression of gayness. Students who come out as being gay face harrassment from every direction. Health teachers tell them that homosexuality is a disorder or even an illness; counselors often try to get them into a psychiatric program; and other students, picking up on all this anti-gay prejudice, add to the harrassment. Administrators have, on occasion, actually suspended students simply for saying they were gay.

Because gayness is such a taboo subject, both among adults and young people, it's hard to organize against this discrimination. But if you have a close group of friends who will support each other, and feel ready to handle a lot of ridicule, then think about challenging anti-gay statements whenever you hear them — in textbooks, in statements by gym teachers and from other students. Whether you are gay or not, doing this will help all students to become more aware of their sexual feelings and prejudices.

Student Access to Resources

Young people who try to do political work usually have trouble getting basic supplies and resources, such as mimeograph machines, meeting rooms, tape recorders, film projectors and layout equipment. Schools and other community institutions usually have the resources or the funds to purchase or rent them.

If the school exists to help students, you should have free access to whatever materials and space the school has. If it doesn't work that way, you could make that one of your first issues. If you have no luck with the school, then there probably are a number of community agencies that may help provide some materials.

You can also organize car washes, bake sales, and intramural athletic events to raise the small amounts of money it takes to get enough of these resources to make a difference.

Another resource is the school building itself. Usually the student council and some "legitimate activities" like french club, etc. get to use the school. Why not a radical student organization? Find out who has the power to let you use school facilities. Usually, you have to be an official school club with a teacher advisor present. If you can meet those requirements, fine: maybe a teacher will front for you without interfering. If not, appeal to the school board and argue that you have

the right to use public facilities and meet by yourself without monitoring and supervision. You should expect to take responsibility for maintaining property and cleaning up afterwards, like everyone else.

Student Center

One thing required for students to work together in schools is a common meeting place where they can keep files, equipment, telephones, and have discussions, study groups and the like. Try to develop a high school center, in school or out, where large numbers of students can get together. You may be able to get space in the school, especially if you make that one of your organizing demands. Many schools have already set up Student Service Centers, which then serve as a base of operations for organizers. Of course, you wouldn't tell them that was one of your reasons for wanting a Center. In the schools where they have been established, Centers usually perform a drop-in counseling service, with a liberal teacher, or other students, talking to students about their problems. You can argue that a Center will take some of the load off of the "overburdened" counselors.

Open Campus

Most schools require you to be in school even when you don't have any classes — for study halls, lunch breaks, etc. Under an open campus system, this would change; you would still have to go to regular classes, but at lunch and whenever you had no academic classes, you would be able to leave campus and go home, downtown, or just out for a walk. Some schools, mostly in suburban areas, already have an open campus.

Most students will quickly support a demand for open campus. But you'll meet opposition from adults; before you formally propose an open campus system, figure out how you're going to answer the objections that are likely to come up.

Administrators are likely to object on the grounds that open campus would draw customers away from the school cafeteria; that it would encourage non-students to wander in and out of the school; that they are legally responsible for you during school hours, and they can't keep an eye on you if you aren't in the building.

(Check state laws on this last point to find out just how much responsibility they do have for you during school hours. Write to schools in your state that have an open campus, and find out how they dealt with this question. Administrators will always be more willing to make a change if they know that others have done the same thing.)

If your high school is close to downtown, the strongest objection to open campus will probably come from local store owners. They don't like having too many students around, scaring off adult shoppers who may spend more money.

School Lunches and Cafeteria Service

The quality of food and service in the cafeteria makes most lunches dismal events. Everybody complains about cafeteria food, and they're not always justified. But if you seriously feel lunches cost too much and taste lousy, then do something about it. These feelings can be used as the beginning of organization.

Students can organize to take their lunches out of the school or eat in neighborhood cafeterias rather than be subject to such control of their digestive processes. In an Illinois school enterprising students joined a food co-op and set up a natural food store near the school. They prepared and sold nutritious lunches to students who didn't like the cafeteria.

Who Controls the Schools?

Every day, thousands of decisions get made in your school — decisions about all kinds of issues, ranging from which teachers to hire to how to balance the budget, to what courses to offer next year and how much money to spend on the athletic program. School administrators and the school board make most of these decisions. Students, most teachers, other school workers like janitors, and community members may get to voice an opinion, but they are left out of the actual decision-making.

The best time to raise the issue of control is when students are being clearly affected by it. If the school has to cancel a popular course because there isn't enough money for it, demand to know who made the decision to spend $2000 on a new flagpole, or whatever, when it could have been used for a course. When a well-liked teacher is about to get fired, raise the question of why students don't get any say in the hiring and firing of teachers.

The Classroom

One area where it should be possible to raise the question of who makes decisions is in the classroom. Teachers, within certain limits, have the authority to tell you what to do, when to do it, and how to do it. They can tell you when you can get a drink of water, move, talk, think, and so on. They have a voice in what books will be required, whether to have lectures, discussions, or individual study, whether to require students to memorize trivia, and how or when to give homework. Through grades, teachers can punish students who don't submit to their authority.

It is in the classroom that students most directly feel their powerlessness to decide how things are run. This is a good place to start your democratizing process. Students will have to come up with some ideas about what to do to encourage teacher respect for their initiative. Some teachers would be overjoyed that students want to do something different in the classroom. Others, those who like (for ideological or psychological reasons) dominating 30 people every day, will resist any such loosening of their authority. In between are teachers who may like the idea but who don't know just how to allow for any more student control. The possibility of a noisy classroom, and a reprimand from the principal, or even being fired keeps many teachers from letting up on their control.

In a New Jersey school, students and a few of their teachers decided to do something about the lack of communication and cooperation that existed between students and most teachers. They arranged, with the

principal, for a half-day workshop, where teachers and students were excused from classes to get together in small groups and share feelings with one another. Attendance was voluntary, but both the students and teachers involved in planning the workshop worked hard to get their friends and co-workers to attend. Small groups of students met in one room and groups of teachers met in another, each talking about their problems in working well with the other group. Then they intermingled, and in groups of four teachers and 8 or 10 students, ideas and views were shared. Some students were so angry or frustrated they mostly yelled, and communicated only their frustration. Some teachers were so frightened or angry themselves that they yelled as well, or just shut their ears. But for the most part, especially when the yelling stopped, people heard new things, at a level they could understand and accept. One excellent outcome of this workshop was that the folks involved in planning it now knew some other people who were clearly committed to building a more trusting and respectful climate in their school. This growth might not turn the school upside down, but it might make living in it a bit more comfortable.

Teachers Want to Run the School, Too

Students are not the only members of the school who wish to influence school affairs. Teachers do too. Teachers want more influence for three reasons: 1) teachers are specially trained, and feel they know more about what young people need and should be in a position to make decisions; 2) what happens in the classroom may be the most important activity of the entire school system; teachers feel they're closest to that classroom activity and should have the most say about what goes on in school; and 3) many teachers feel that only by running the school can they guarantee that their own desires will be met, that their own needs for time off, for relaxation and for control, will be taken care of. Teachers are very concerned about increases in students' power and usually wish to maintain their own superiority.

Principals also like to feel they are running the show. Since the principal is appointed by the school superintendent or school board to be the official authority in school, she usually makes decisions about class size, class arrangement, hiring of teachers, and the like. In return for power to run the school, the principal usually is under pressure from a lot of different groups to do what each of them wants. Teachers, community groups, other principals, and superintendents all want the principal to do this, that or the other thing.

Many principals feel uncomfortable with the pressures that are on them, and are looking for a way out. On decisions she feels are unimportant you might just get your way. On the others, you will have to fight — join the battle for control.

School Finances

It's not a terribly exciting subject, but the way your school gets money, and the way it spends it, is important. If only a few students in your school want to do organizing, then finances is probably not the area you want to spend time on. But if you have a good-sized student union, and a

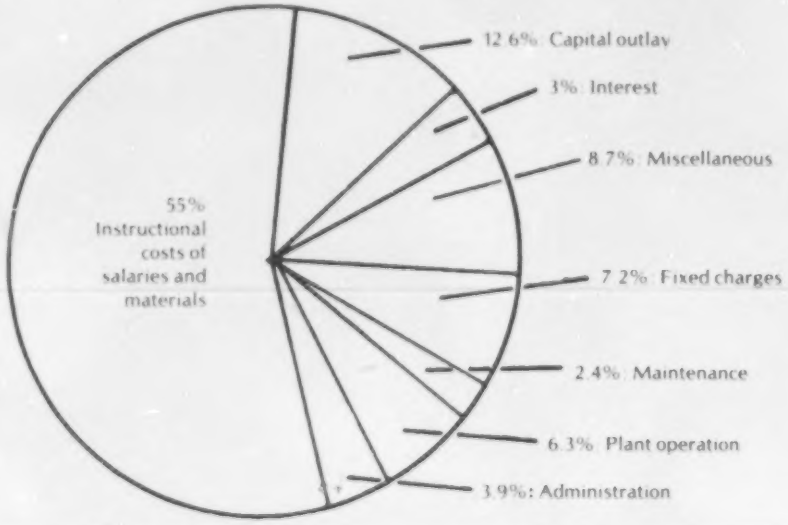
lot of people willing to work, then two or three of them could tackle the issue of school finances.

First find out where your community gets the money to spend on schools. If from taxes, are they income taxes or property taxes? Paid by individuals or large firms or corporations? Is everyone, each neighborhood and each factory paying a fair share? What percentage comes from state revenues? From government agencies? From corporate gifts or grants?

Different states and communities spend different amounts of money for the schooling of their children. For instance, in the state of Arkansas, approximately $881 is spent on every student per year. In New York state $2179 is spent. In addition, the amount of money spent per student may also vary considerably within a state, depending upon how much money a community has to spend and on how great a priority is placed on education. In Alameda County in California, for example, the Emery Unified School District spent $2223 on each student in 1968-69; the nearby Newark Unified School District, located in a poorer neighborhood, spent only $616 that year.

How does your school spend its money? How much goes into student controlled programs?

This chart shows how the total expenses for one school might break down



How does your school system spend it's money? You can get a copy of the budget from the board of education. Consider just how much of this money is spent as you think about changing the school. What parts of your life are affected by which budget alteration? Sometimes the amount of money available or the way it is spent affects the academic program, or the sports program, or general extra-curricular activities. Look at what a big bite salaries of teachers and administrators take out. If so many adults were not required to control young people in schools, a great deal of money could be saved or spent elsewhere. These statistics (see box) may be somewhat different in your community. You can probably get or create a similar chart from your school system's administrative office. It is public information. You have a right to see it.

Organizing around finances is hard for students. But it is usually a hot item for parents and community taxpayers. If you have information on things like this that they care about, you might be able to work them into your overall efforts for changing school. The power to control money is often the power to control schools.

Grades

People learn best when they are interested in a topic and want to learn more about it. However, professional educators generally don't trust students to want to learn. Moreover, they don't trust their own ability to make their subjects interesting to students. So they use grades to encourage and reward students. But grades can't really tell how much you have learned; they tell more about your test-taking ability, your ability to please the teacher or even your race or class background.

Grades also breed competition. Your grade is always compared to others'. Competition is highly valued in our society, and the schools feel you should learn it. Grades also enable the school to rank students and to prepare them for their place in the hierarchy. Since grades are supposed to be neutral evaluations of students' performance, they help to convince those who have done poorly that it is their own fault, and those who have done well come to believe that they are on top because of their natural talent.

The most important immediate function of grades is to keep students in line. Students are rewarded for obedience and punished for resistance. People who like school get better grades than those who don't. It is a subtle form of coercion, because grades aren't supposed to measure your attitude toward school — they're supposed to measure achievement. But most students learn early that many factors enter into grading, and adjust themselves to the system as smoothly as possible.

What can you do about grades? Not much besides trying not to take them too seriously. Educators don't want to give up their power in this area. If you have a strong student group, with a few victories behind you, you may feel ready to take on the grading system. Read about the alternatives. Pass/fail systems are the most common, but there are

others. In contract systems, for example, students discuss with their teachers what they want to accomplish and then are graded according to how well they achieve their goals.

Find out what is required by law. If you ask the school board for something it doesn't have authority to give you, it will have an easy excuse for turning you down.

The six-foot height versus the four-point average

That old maxim, "If you don't do well in school, you won't do well in real life," has been attacked from several sides in recent years, but the unkindest cut of all has to be the result of the American College Testing (ACT)'s six-year study of grades and success. It found that good grades **do not** correlate with one's success as an adult.

ACT's finding confirms those of many other studies which have found that success in high school is not very related to success outside of school. In fact, some studies have found that height is a better determinant of success than grades are.

However, ACT cautions that academic talents are still important. A college education is necessary for most positions of responsibility in society, the report says, and certain minimal levels of academic talent are necessary for completion of college. In that sense, success in later life does depend somewhat on academic talent — just as it depends on learning to sit still and to obey authority.

Sports

For some students, sports are the only aspect of school life that is any fun. Others pay only a little attention to the sports program, or ignore it completely.

High school sports programs usually have two levels. Varsity levels involve inter-scholastic competition, a coaching staff, the most skilled players, strong pressure to win, and a lot of financial backing. Intramural sports involve much less of all those things, and are run more informally.

Unfortunately, intramural sports often don't meet students' needs. The school puts most of its efforts into building a strong varsity team, because that's what brings the most prestige. Students who want to play sports on a casual basis end up having to fend for themselves.

If enough students are dissatisfied with this arrangement, why not propose something else. Figure out what kind of intramural program really would work well. Would changes involve: more money for equipment, better coaching, more flexible hours, gym credit, more varied sports, or what?

Since sports are considered a pretty wholesome thing for young people to be involved in, you should be able to get a certain amount of community support if you decide to propose a new, better system of intramural sports. Your main opposition will come if you decide to

Who wants sports?

The group most favored by sports programs as they presently exist, high school males, don't seem to think much of them. That's the conclusion of a **Youth in Transition** study done at the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan. Given a chance to rate 14 high school education objectives in order of importance, male students put sports at the bottom.

from FPS

suggest that the varsity budget be substantially cut in order to fund intramural sports.

Other Issues

The suggestions discussed here represent just a few of the many areas you could organize around. Don't get so blinded by this list that when other issues come up, in your community or your school, you don't see them.

For example, groups in many communities have taken up censorship. They go through all the books in the school library, make a list of the ones that contain obscenities, radical political ideas, or anything else they don't like, and demand that the school get rid of these books. Or they decide that certain teachers are subversive, because they allow too much freedom for students, and they demand that those teachers be fired. Or they decide that sex education courses promote immorality and must be stopped.

Whenever this happens, the whole community usually starts talking about it, and everyone in the school takes sides. Your job is to take advantage of all this interest. Even if you decided last month to focus on some other issue, put that aside for a while (if it can wait) and put your efforts where people's interests are. You'll get more done that way, and be able to build a strong base for your group.

Getting Out

If you feel you're not getting much of an education, and the school is really pressing on you, think seriously about getting out. There are alternatives, even if the school doesn't want you to think so.

The youth job market is always in bad shape, but you may be able to find something. If you have some way to support yourself, you can study on your own and get the equivalent of a high school diploma by taking a test. Investigate the General Equivalency Degree (your school should

have information about it). If you are headed for college, the Equivalency diploma may not be as good as a regular one, but for most jobs it is fine.

Summary

1. Be realistic about which issues a lot of students are likely to be interested in, and which not. Generally, you'll want to do organizing around issues that have a reasonable amount of support from the rest of the students, even if those aren't the ones that you think are most important. But at the same time, do talk to people about the problems you feel are most important. Maybe they'll agree with you when they think about it for awhile.

2. Remember, the basic issue in all organizing is your right to control your own life. Unless and until you get that right, and the power to use it, you and the administration are antagonists. You may temporarily agree on certain things, or even work together now and then, but your basic interests are different.

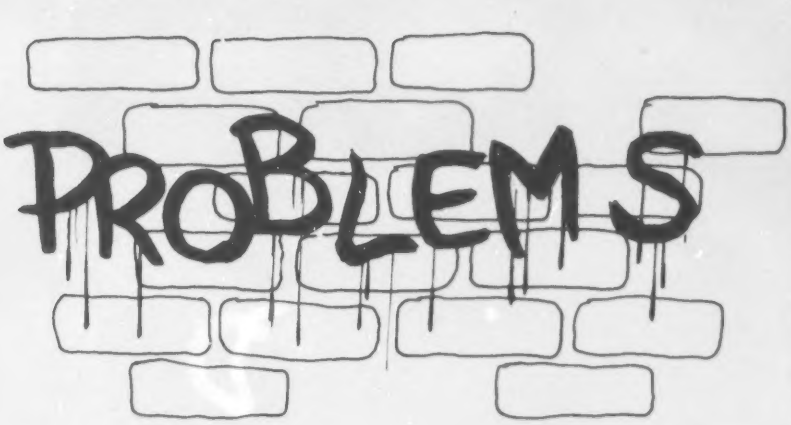
3. Watch for ways to get new people involved. Go out of your way to invite students from other groups in the school to work with you. Get to know them personally, as well as just working with them. Look for ways to work with friendly teachers and community groups too.

4. Don't just talk about doing something — *do* something. Sure you'll probably make some mistakes, but none of them will be as big as the mistake of just sitting around talking and not doing anything at all.

5. Don't forget about your education. You're getting one while you're planning and organizing. You're learning lots about your school, your community, yourself, and the political process. We consider this the guts of an education, even if the schools don't. Pay attention to the process of your learning too, and try to pass it on to others.

6. Use your local library — and librarian — as a source of information. Nearly every subject that's touched on in this pamphlet is discussed in more detail somewhere in your library. If you can't find what you need, ask someone at the reference desk to help; if they can't help, ask a different reference librarian the next day. Eventually you'll be successful. One thing the library is especially good for is looking up laws. A number of times in this pamphlet we have advised you to "check state and local laws" about a certain subject. The library is the first place to head. If you have no luck there, then try city hall.

7. Above all, don't get discouraged. Organizing is usually a slow process, with occasional spurts of action. Expect that, and don't let it get you down. The rewards involved make it all worthwhile.



Certain problems keep popping up for high school organizers. Being aware of the more common ones will help you catch them before they get too big. When problems do creep up on you, referring to this chapter can give you some ideas about them.

Cooptation — Several students in New Jersey, after being put down one too many times by the administration, decided to organize a student union. A lot of students wanted a smoking lounge, so the Student Union made that it's first big issue.

Their first meeting was publicized as a "What Do We Do About the Smoking Policy?" meeting. They got a wide spectrum of students to attend the meeting, at which they planned their strategy. Everyone was enthused about the possiblity of getting a smoking lounge.

Three days later, the principal made an announcement over the P.A. system: he was going to set up a smoking lounge. The reason, the principal said, was that several responsible students had expressed the need for such a place, and had pointed out that when smokers are forced to use the rest rooms to light up, both smokers and non-smokers suffered. Furthermore, said the principal, he thought it was important for the administration to keep up with what the students were thinking. Therefore, he was forming a "Principal's Advisory Board." He named a dozen students, including the three who had been most active in the union, to be on his advisory board.

Did the students win a victory? At first they thought so; they had their smoking lounge. But the student union quickly lost steam. It's reason for being and it's leadership were both gone.

The union never met again, and the advisory board, though it met occasionally, never did anything. Several students realized that a lot still needed to be changed in the school, but there was no organization to push for those changes. In a word, the students had been coopted.

Cooptation takes place whenever the administration grants little favors in order to give itself a liberal, "we are on your side" image. Cooptation takes some of the power out of student organizations because, although students haven't actually won any more control over how their lives are run, they get the impression that the administration is really OK, so it wouldn't be nice to fight them.

What can you do about the possibility of cooptation? To some extent, you've just got to accept it as an occupational hazard. But there are a few steps you can take.

Analyze your administrators. Are they likely to try to coopt you? Some principals are so hung up on proving that they are the boss that they would never dream of giving in a little as a way of stopping you. With them, it may make sense to organize around minor issues, so that they look really silly and pig-headed for not giving in. Other administrators are craftier, and will try cooptation. With them, you'll need to choose items that will be harder for them to give in on.

A second thing you can do is to be wary of "advisory boards." Assume they are a trap, a cooptation device that will give you no more power than you had before, unless they are shown to be otherwise. Ask loudly why the boards are only advisory, why students aren't getting a real voice in things.

The third precaution has been mentioned before in this pamphlet, but it's hard to do and is worth mentioning again. Whatever issues you choose, constantly tie them in with larger, more basic issues. Tie the open campus issue together with the demand for students being able to control their own lives. Tie the smoking lounge in with the ageism issue — why should adults in the school be able to smoke while young people can't. Everytime you discuss or write about the smoking lounge, stick in a few sentences about ageism. Then when the principal "grants" you the right to smoke, you can point out all other ageist practices that still go on in the school and ask if anything is being done about them.

Repression — While the PhD-educated administrators try to coopt you, the ones who got their training as army sargeants will more likely just try to repress you, using whatever blunt force they can muster.

This may take the form of school-sponsored repression, like low grades, suspension, expulsion, comments on your permanent record, new rules, non-existent-but-enforced-anyway-rules, or stricter enforcement of old regulations. Or it can be some police harrassment, including arrests.

Such repression can sometimes be used to your advantage. Some students will get mad at the administration for being so brutal or unfair. Others will be attracted by the excitement of seeing someone

An FPS essay contest offers top prizes!

What institution does school remind you of? Two psychologists, writing in the June 1975 **Psychology Today** compared schools to prisons and found that the two environments "resemble each other to a remarkable and distressing degree." They found that schools have "guards posing as teachers, and students learning how to be docile prisoners."

Other people have likened schools to factories, and still others to the military. We want to know which institution you think schools most resemble: prisons, factories or the military. Write a short essay describing why you believe as you do and send it to Youth Liberation. We'll print the ones we think are best and give a one-year subscription to their authors. Remember that your paper will be graded not on what you choose, but on how you defend your choice. Be sure to put your name and date in the upper right corner. For extra credit you may compare the role of your principal with that of prison wardens, factory supervisors or desk sergeants.

defy the authorities — something they've been secretly longing to do.

But there are dangers. The people who were sympathetic may get scared if it looks like repression is about to fall on them. Recognize that people are going to get scared, and try not to put them down for it. Talk to them, find out what their fears are, and encourage them to do what they think is right even if it does have unpleasant repercussions. Fear affects people strongest when then have no one to discuss it with.

Apathy — Is there anything that people complain about more than apathy? Probably not. And it's true that most students simply aren't interested in political issues. Like many people in this society, they've learned the easiest way to survive is by turning off to most of what goes on around them.

Apathy often comes from a sense of hopelessness. If you're convinced that nothing you can do will change anything, then why should you do anything? If you can get a few minor successes behind you, and

550 students walk out

About half of the 550 students at Montgomery High School walked out of school recently in protest over the school's dress code.

The walkout occurred after about 50 students were suspended for not passing the haircut inspection.

The problem began when teachers sent about 125 students to the auditorium, because they felt the students had violated the school's dress code. The students had been notified the previous day about the inspection.

Most of the alleged violators were boys who had long hair or who were wearing boots (both are code violations) but a few female students were also sent down for wearing jeans or having "bushy" hair.

Don Bentien, the school's principal, inspected the group and then suspended 50 students who he felt violated the code.

Immediately following the suspensions, several hundred students assembled in the auditorium to complain about the dress code. They refused to return to class, and most walked out of school after Bentien threatened to suspend them.

"We have a dress code policy supported by the school board and the people in the community and it's my job to enforce it," he said.

A number of the students said they weren't mad at Bentien, because he was only doing what the school board tells him to do. "We've been trying to reason with the school board non-violently, but they won't listen," said Steve Horazdovsky, a student. "It's like talking to a brick wall."

On February 26, six days after the walkout, the school board met with six students from the student council and agreed to a "new" code.

"We had a good meeting and got a lot done," said board member Marvin Lolars. "I think we understand each other better."

Barbara Lind, spokesperson for the student council (but not for the students) agreed. "Even more important than the new code itself is that I don't think we'll be afraid to go to the board with problems in the future. We found out that they're really people and that they'll listen to us. We didn't feel that before we sat down with them, but now I'm sure we would have been able to talk with them as well without the walkout."

She also said that another walkout would not happen because they are sure that by going and talking to the board, the students can settle problems.

Under the new policy, students have been granted two of their requests:

1) Males may wear their hair any length as long as it isn't a health or safety hazard.

2) Females may wear jeans or slacks any time as long as they aren't faded and don't have ragged legs.

The student council will be the enforcer of the new policy.

The students had, however, given in on other demands, including the right to grow a beard or

publicize those successes as evidence that things can be changed, it will help.

Apathy may also mean that you're not tapping the issues most students could get interested in. Check this out by talking with more students about the issues that hassle them. Everyone's hassled by something, even if they don't shout about it.

Also, try more education. Print and distribute interesting, attractive, informative leaflets discussing various issues. Over a period of time, this can get people talking about these subjects and eventually raise the consciousness of the student body.

Finally, whenever anyone shows the slightest interest in your group, do all you can to keep them involved. If a new person comes to a meeting, someone should make it a point to go over and talk to her, and make her feel comfortable. It might even be a good idea to write down the name, interests, and phone number of each person who expresses

mustache.

Curtis Westerman, head of the school board, was adamantly opposed to permitting facial hair. "I just don't like it, that's all. If we throw that out, then I'm leaving. They're not going to come to school looking like a bunch of shags."

Westerman added, "So help me, Hannah, (a student council member), if we grant you this, you'd better enforce it."

The council's most glaring sell-out was an agreement that they will write a letter to appear in the **Montgomery Messenger** explaining that the students did not go through "proper channels" to bring the dispute to an end, and that a number of students who had walked out had misinformed their parents by saying they had been suspended.

by Sam Goodly, in FPS

800 students protest administration policies

Eight hundred students walked out of Lansing, Michigan's four high schools last December in protest of a wide variety of administration policies. The strike was led by a coalition of black, white, and Chicano students.

The strike was hastily planned, though, and this led to difficulties. It was originally scheduled to begin on a Monday, with increasing momentum and agitation in and around the schools, building to a massive walkout Tuesday. At that time a preliminary meeting was to be held with the superintendent of schools, to present the demands and commence negotiations. A rally was planned for Wednesday so all the students could get together to discuss issues, demands, and further actions.

Due to a communications failure, some of the strike leaders met with the Superintendent on Monday and agreed to a resolution of the strike, not on the basis of the demands, but on the agreement that some machinery would be set up to "discuss" the grievances uncovered through discussions with the students. Several committees were to be created to recommend solutions to the problems.

Some of the strike leaders felt that the temporary agreement was the wrong tactic because it didn't deal with the demands, but merely established another group which would talk everyone to death. However, word of the settlement had gotten out and the strike was dissolving, so there was no choice but to go along with the agreements, at least temporarily.

The strike ended before it really got underway, and most of the issues were left unresolved. The amnesty demand was granted, at least on paper. But recrimination is taking place in other forms anyway.

Lansing students will only become more discontented if their demands are not met. The administration has won a breathing spell, but it may be short lived.

any interest in what you are doing. Go over that list regularly, calling people up and talking to them about what they'd like to do, what they'd like to see the group do, etc. The section on involving new people has more suggestions.

Transience — It's happened to practically every high school student-run organization that has ever existed. A few people, usually juniors or seniors, get into leadership positions. They do most of the work, take the initiative on new projects, and keep track of what's what. Then they graduate, and everything falls apart.

To avoid this problem, you have to do more than just get new people involved. You must allow room for them to move into key positions and to take leadership. As new projects come up, encourage new members to take responsibility for them, instead of you adding them to your own work-load.

Furthermore, everyone who expects to graduate or leave town at the end of the school year should ask themselves what skills they have that must be passed on: knowing how to write and design a leaflet, doing mimeograph work, laying out a paper. Before the middle of the year, you should be making an effort to teach those skills to someone else.

Political Differences — Unity is important, but not at the cost of giving in on important political principles. When there are basic differences between members of your group, and you can't resolve them through discussion, it may be best to form several different groups. Then you can create a coalition or united front around those issues that you do agree on, rather than trying to form one student union with a clearly defined political philosophy.

Likewise, there may be other groups in the community that agree with certain demands, but aren't interested in the over-all issues of ageism, or the right of students to control their own lives. Don't be sucked into these other groups, but work with them, while retaining your own identity. Keep talking to them about ageism and student power, so that someday they will support your issues.

Racial and Class Divisions — The way you define your goals will affect who gets involved with your group. In many situations, middle- and upper-class students will be concerned about different problems than poor and working-class students, and whites will encounter different problems than blacks and third world students.

For example, white students may be concerned about getting more voice in determining school rules, while minorities may be more concerned about discriminatory enforcement of whatever rules do exist. Or middle-class students may want to push for a more varied curriculum, while working-class students may be more concerned about how they are tracked into the curriculum that exists. If you want to have students from all backgrounds involved in your group, you will have to deal with all of these concerns.

If your group consists of mostly white middle-class students it should still be evident that you really are concerned about the problems faced by third-world and lower-income students as well. If controversy should

start up about bussing, or curriculum bias, or discriminatory tests, get involved. Also consider educating people and organizing around issues like tracking which are clearly tied to race and class discrimination. By actively taking initiative on this, you can concretely show other kids that you *do* want to expand and represent the interests of all students.

These may be the most important issues for black and white alike. If students are an oppressed group, minority students are an especially oppressed group. As they become free, so does everyone else. On the other hand, just because middle-class white students get freedom doesn't mean minority students will benefit.

This is another situation where coalitions may work better than a united group. If you can create one union of all students — great. If not, keep in mind that there are other student groups, and try to work together on school issues as much as possible, instead of fighting one another. Parents and teachers often make it very hard for students of different races and classes to work together. Why not — it's "divide and conquer." It's a repeat of the racism and classism of the adult society. Don't let them do it. Students all over the country have mademulti-racial coalitions and have worked together for change in the schools.

Finally, don't be afraid to discuss race and class issues at meetings. Have discussions even if they don't seem necessary — that way people will be encouraged to discuss any grievances or hard feelings *before* problems arise.

Free Schools — Several years ago, a medium-sized university town in Florida had a surprisingly strong high school student coalition. Half a dozen kids were actively involved, and hundreds of others supported it and turned out for rallies, demonstrations, and mass meetings. Better yet, many of the key organizers in the group were in ninth or tenth grade — they would be around for another few years to continue organizing.

But they weren't. That spring, the school board unexpectedly voted to open a "school without walls" the next year. It was a public free school. Students could take practically whatever courses they wanted, got to plan their own activities, and generally had as much fun as is possible to have in school. Nearly all of the leaders of the student coalition went to the new school. Since they no longer felt so oppressed by school policies, they became less active and the coalition fell apart.

The same thing has happened in dozens of cities. In fact, in 1971 a magazine for school administrators ran articles encouraging school boards to set up "free" schools as a way of getting rid of troublemakers! They are, too often, a form of cooptation.

In the past, our usual advice for organizers in this position has been: don't go. Stay in the regular school system, where most of the students are and where conditions are most oppressive, and organize there.

That advice is still good. Staying in a regular public school system does make sense from a political viewpoint, but face it, it's hard. The little frustrations and the long boredoms of conventional schools are maddening. You may decide, after weighing all sides of the issue, that if a free school is available, you are going to attend it.

In that case, you can still do organizing. It will be harder to organize around school-related issues, because school won't feel as oppressive for you or the people you are around. But you *will* be able to attack ageism in the community, curfews, ageism in stores, state and local laws about drinking, smoking, driving, and other age restrictions...whatever seems most important. In some ways you'll be in a better position than before to do organizing, because you probably won't have to spend as much time on homework and school activities. In fact, you may be able to tie your organizing activities into a school project, and get credit for them.

If you do attend a free school, do not forget to stay in constant touch with students at your old school. Watch for opportunities to work with them on common problems.

Personal Hassles — You can't separate your personal life from your political activities. Once you begin organizing, that's going to affect how you look at other people. Your friends, your parents, your teachers... they may admire what you are doing, they may oppose it, or they may have mixed feelings, but they are not likely to be neutral.

Parents are a big problem if they oppose your political involvement. But before you write them off, make some effort to convince them that what you are doing is valuable.

First, listen to what they think. Try to understand just what their objections are, and whether they are intellectually, or emotionally based. If you do that, they may actually listen to what you are saying, later.

At dinner, mention things the administration did that day that obviously interfere with your education and your rights. Many parents have no idea how humiliating school really is, and they may get quite upset at some of the things that happen. Encourage your brothers and sisters, other friends, and sympathetic teachers to talk with your parents about the situation, too. The more often they hear the same thing, and the more "respectable" the source is, the more likely they are to believe it.

In some cases, all this will achieve nothing. Your parents will just get worse, even to the point of interfering with your political work. That calls for more drastic action. You can stand up to them, explain that they have no right to run your life, and that as long as they show no respect for you as a person, you will show no respect for their rules and demands. Or you can take the ultimate step and run away. That requires planning, some experiences with the outside world, and ideally, knowing someone you can stay with awhile. Moreover, just staying alive will take up so much of your time that there won't be a chance to do much organizing. Even when you move out, it is a good idea to keep in touch in some way — or at least let them know you're okay.

In several cities, young people who have decided to live away from home have gotten a house together where they share the cooking, cleaning, and rent. It takes a lot of energy and dedication, and a good bit of money, to keep something like that going. But it has been done.

Another personal hassle for organizers is less obvious. It's the problem of coping with all the fears and risks that are involved in political work, the harrassment from administrators and teachers and students, the pressures of grades, and so on. If you have to deal with all these problems alone, it can drive you up the wall. So develop a close personal relationship with other people who are politically active in school, in your community, or even neighboring areas. Talk with them about the problems you face, and listen to what they're up against. The sanity you save may be your own.

As for grades, try not to worry about them: you're in high school to get an education, and learn about life, right? Well, your organizing work will teach you more than doing all that homework you've been skipping lately.

If there is no struggle, there is no progress. Those who profess to freedom and yet deprecate agitation would want crops without plowing. They want rain without thunder and lightening. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its mighty waters. This struggle may be a moral one, or it may be physical, but it must be a struggle. Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.

Frederick Douglass, 1857

APPENDIX

A Student Bill of Rights — long overdue

Under the present school system students are not allowed to control their own lives. This educational system is designed not to give students the best possible opportunity to develop their talents but to supply the quality and quantity of workers for the present economic system. The schools track minorities and poor people into menial and factory jobs, while tracking women on to secretarial and domestic occupations and leaving a relatively small number of people to do professional jobs. Our schools teach us to passively accept authority rather than to question it. Schools emphasize and exaggerate the actions of the rich and powerful, while excluding the history of women, third world and working people.

The school system induces competition, instead of cooperation, it divides us instead of allowing us to unite, it encorages us to adopt materialistic goals instead of human values. It encourages discrimination against people on the basis of sex, race, age, social classes, and supposed intellectual ability.

We believe that students are more important than this institution and therefore we wish to democratize and humanize our schools. In order to do this, the following rights must be guaranteed.

I. WE WANT SELF-DETERMINATION FOR ALL STUDENTS. THEREFORE, WE DEMAND:

1. All classroom decisions be made on the basis of one person, one vote.
2. Students have control of school policy with all decisions made by direct referendum of the students.
3. Student determination of teaching methods and course content.
4. The abolition of the grading system and the institution of self-evaluation.
5. Student control over the hiring and firing of teachers.
6. The abolition of the tracking system.
7. An end to compulsory class attendance and compulsory schooling.
8. The right for students to form political and social organizations in the school, regardless of the political views of the organization.
9. An end to all discrimination on the basis of race, sex, or political views.

II. STUDENTS, BOTH IN SCHOOL AND OUT, MUST BE GRANTED ALL RIGHTS ENUMERATED IN THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION, THE BILL OF RIGHTS, OTHER AMENDMENTS, AND THOSE ESTABLISHED BY THE COURTS. THESE MUST INCLUDE, BUT NOT BE LIMITED TO, THE FOLLOWING:

1. The right to publish and distribute any leaflets, or other publications, without any prior authorization.
2. Freedom from search of books, lockers, or person without the freely given consent of the student involved.
3. The right to due process, including a hearing for any student who is accused of disobeying a rule, with the right to counsel, the right to question witnesses, and the right to a jury of other students.
4. All rules which have been passed by a majority of students and are in force, must be made available in writing to any interested students.
5. Students may express their political beliefs through any symbols such as buttons, armbands, style of clothing and length of hair that they choose, for whatever reason they choose it.

III. SCHOOLS MUST SERVE THE COMMUNITY, NOT THE GOVERNMENT, MILITARY, OR OTHER INSTITUTIONS. THIS MEANS THAT:

1. Schools must be open to anyone from the community who wishes to attend them, regardless of age.
2. Students have the right to full use of school facilities, including bulletin boards, mimeograph machines, meeting rooms and auditoriums, layout equipment, projectors, and the public address system.
3. There shall be an end to all military programs such as ROTC in the schools and to all military recruiting.
4. Federal or other government officials shall not be given any information about students without written consent of that student.

Adapted from the program of the Wisconsin Student Union.

Sample leaflets from past student organizing drives

YOU DON'T GOTTA.

You don't gotta let them regulate what you read and write and say and think.

You don't gotta take teachers' bullshit.

You don't gotta pretend to respect the authority of the faculty and administrators.

You don't gotta "do your thing" on Fridays.

You don't gotta obey the dress code.

You don't gotta get an ID card.

You don't gotta stand during the "Star Spangled Banner" at assemblies.

You don't gotta go to study hall or even class.

You don't gotta do your history homework.

You don't gotta let your life be ruled by grades.

You don't gotta let them scare you into not leafleting leaflets like these.

BECAUSE - you are a human being not part of a machine.

You're a person, not a thing. Or a robot to be programmed, or a number.

The U.S. Constitution gives you the rights to free speech, freedom of the press, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of petition, freedom from unreasonable search and seizure, freedom from self-incrimination, freedom from cruel and unusual punishment, freedom from slavery or involuntary servitude.

You supposedly have the rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

You are being denied all of these rights—except the right to life, and you're not being allowed much of that, either.

The instigators of this leaflet must remain necessarily anonymous, so we are temporarily living behind the name YOU DON'T GOTTA.

You can contact us thru CADRE. Call or write us c/o CADRE, 664-6895
519 W. North Ave.
Chicago 60610)

STUDENT REPRESSION GOES RAMPANT

SUPPORT WED. 4 "LATE IN"

COME 15 MINUTES LATE TO YOUR FIRST CLASS

SULLIVAN STUDENTS WILL SHOW THEIR DISSATISFACTION WITH:

INSIPID TARDY PENALTYS!

ONE DOOR ENTRANCE AFTER LUNCH!

POLICE HALL GUARDS!

PREVENTING WASHROOM USE DURING FREE PERIODS!!

AND OTHER SEVERE STUDENT RESTRICTIONS

THIS IS OUR SCHOOL - THE WASHROOMS, LUNCHROOM, SCHOOL + BOOK STORE, AND HALLS ARE OURS TO USE.

SUPPORT THE "LATE IN" + SHOW THE ADMINISTRATION YOUR A HUMAN BEING - NOT A PUPPET

Speak up if you want to be heard;

Shut up if you want to be appreciated.

Our school has been plagued by unnecessary dress and hair rules for long enough. Times and people are changing rapidly; therefore, so should we. We will run our country in the next generation so we must prepare for it.

Does the Bible say anywhere in it that contemporary dress and long hair is sinful? Do the state laws say you are to be arrested for long hair and 'freaky' clothes?

We feel our school should be one of the better schools in Houston. If we, the students of Jane Long Jr. High, have freedom of dress and hair styles, we will be on the road to accomplishing this. In order to get this, we must let Jane Long know we want it.

It takes time and patience and your help to do so. Remember, Jane Long is ours too.

4 1

are you willing to fight for the rights you should have?

we're willing to help.

Youth Liberation
2007 Washtenaw Ave.
Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104

The Rights of a High School Student

2 3

Rights??
Be serious!

4 1

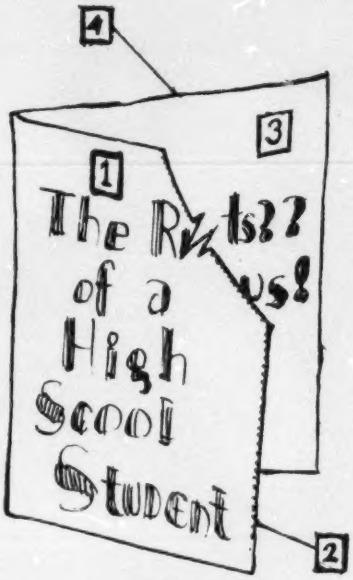
Youth Liberation
2007 Washtenaw Ave.
Ann Arbor, Mich. 48104

Public Schools Promote:

AGEISM
racism
SCHIZOPHRENIA
hate
SUBORDINATION
linear thought
SEXISM
militarism
NATIONALISM
oligarchies
LONELINESS
and other
CHARACTER
disorders

2 3

Besides, they're a drag



Many youth liberation groups have used the two leaflets pictured on this page to attract interest in their activities.

As you can see by the illustration, the leaflets are made by folding an 8½x11 sheet in half. That gives you four panels to work with. We have numbered the panels so you can see how the leaflets go together. If you can't visualize them, take a piece of paper and sketch in the pages in the proper order.

One person who reviewed this pamphlet was concerned because she felt it didn't contain enough analysis of discrimination and oppression in our society. She thought that could lead to problems. (For example, a group of relatively privileged students could get all caught up in organizing against the petty restrictions the schools impose on them, while ignoring the more serious oppression faced by black and poor students.)

We also recognized that problem, but felt it was largely beyond the scope of this pamphlet. However, there are many publications that do address the broad range of problems in American society, and we encourage readers to take advantage of them. Here is a short list. Be sure to look over the Youth Liberation materials on the next page, too.

Seven Days, Box 977, Farmingdale, NY 11737 — At first glance, **Seven Days** looks like **Time** or **Newsweek**, a slick newsmagazine, with a good balance of national and international news, book and film reviews, some sports coverage, and short news items. The difference is that **Seven Days** presents the news from a radical perspective. It is an excellent source of topical information, and it looks so respectable that your parents might even pick it up.

In These Times, 1509 N. Milwaukee Ave., Chicago, IL 60622 — **ITT** is an "independent socialist newspaper" published weekly. It is easy to read, and specializes in coverage of progressive movements in the U.S. and Europe.

The Guardian, 33 W. 17th St., New York, NY 10011 — If you're interested in news about the third world — Africa, Asia and Latin America — **The Guardian** is the best source available. It is an independent weekly newspaper, which also has good coverage of movements in the U.S., and informative theoretical discussion.

Monthly Review, 62 W. 14th St., New York, NY 10011 — This magazine is respected the world over for its clear writing and clear-headed political analysis. Monthly Review Press also publishes many excellent books. Write them for a catalog and subscription information.

The Organizer's Manual, by the O.M. Collective; **Rules for Radicals** and **Reveille for Radicals**, by Saul Alinsky — These three books are full of practical information about organizing. Though they aren't directed at young people, most of the information in them can be applied to any organizing situation. Saul Alinsky was one of America's most effective community organizers; reading about his experiences is a good education in organizing.

The Rights of Students, by Alan H. Levine, et. al. — This book, published by the American Civil Liberties Union, is a clear, comprehensive guide to the rights of public school students. It's written in a question and answer format which makes it readable and practical.

The Civil Rights of Students, by David Schimmel and Louis Fischer — The authors cover basically the same territory as the ACLU book (above) but from a slightly different perspective. Each chapter covers a different point of law in depth.

Captive Voices, by Jack Nelson — If you're planning to publish an underground paper, and want some factual information about what's wrong with the official high school press, this is the book to read. The author found that censorship and a "systematic lack of freedom" characterize the high school press.

The Children's Rights Movement: Overcoming the Oppression of Young People, by Beatrice and Ronald Gross — This large collection contains many of the best articles that have been written on children's liberation. Because it presents a broad spectrum of issues and opinions on young people's liberation, it is an excellent introduction to the movement.

Weeping in the Playtime of Others, by Ken Wooden — The author has written a powerful indictment of this nation's juvenile justice system. He describes, in frightening detail, some of the horrors of juvenile prisons, and he analyzes the political interests which maintain the system.

The Child Savers: The Invention of Delinquency, by Anthony Platt — Platt's historical analysis of the juvenile justice system is essential for modern day reformers.

Roots of Crisis: Education in the Twentieth Century, by Clarence Karier, Paul Violas and Joel Spring — This short book contains essays which examine the historical forces that helped shape the schools.

Student and Youth Organizing — $1.50

A 96 page pamphlet which discusses organizing young people in and out of school. It has chapters about issues to organize around, tactics to use, skills to know, problems that come up, and a bibliography. Actual incidents, illustrating the points discussed, are described throughout the pamphlet.

Unfair to Young People: How the Public Schools Got the Way They Are — $1

A 48 page pamphlet that examines the public schools from the perspective of students. The author did extensive research on this subject while he was a member of the Wisconsin Youth for Democratic Education. First, he discusses how the school system evolved. Seemingly innocuous reforms like junior high schools, ability grouping, student council and even recess, were all started as ways to better control students, says the author. Then he looks at what schools do to students today, and how they can be changed.

High School Women's Liberation — $1.25

A collection of over 20 articles about young women's liberation. Included in this 80 page pamphlet are discussions about the school scene, sexism in textbooks, sports, lesbianism, black women, sexuality, legal rights, sexism in language and music, and poetry by young women. There are also several book reviews and an article by a man about his experiences with sexism. This is an excellent resource.

Youth Liberation: News, Politics and Survival information — $1.75

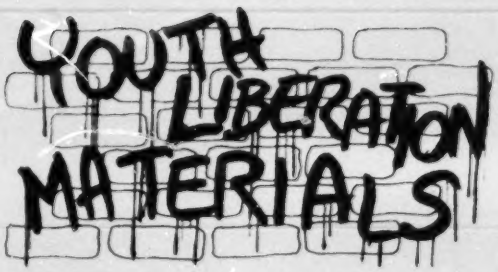
Some of the best articles from the early issues of **FPS** are collected in this paperback book, which was published by Times Change Press in 1972. It also contains the original Youth Liberation platform and personal statements from young people on the need to struggle for liberation.

Growing Up Gay — $.75

This 36 page pamphlet contains a dozen articles by sensitive young men and women about the experience of being young and gay. Included are articles about accepting one's gayness, coming out, and talking with parents. There is an extensive list of resources.

Young People and the Law: What the Courts Have Had to Say — $.75

Actual decisions, mostly by the U.S. Supreme Court, form the basis of this pamphlet. They are edited for easier reading. Valuable for young people who often don't hear about the court rulings that affect them. Includes the **Tinker v. Des Moines** case on student rights, **In re Gault** on due process of law for juveniles, and **Scoville v. Joliet** on free press rights.



How to Start a High School Underground Newspaper — $.50

The basic primer for media oriented high school organizers. It discusses printing methods, finances, school policies, legal implications, and the many other details that go into publishing an effective newspaper. Editors of school-sanctioned papers also find it useful.

How to Research the Power Structure of Your Secondary School — $1.00

A step-by-step approach to determining how decisions are made in public schools. Written in textbook form, with worksheets and questions, the book can help students trace lines of authority so they can quickly determine who is responsible for decisions that affect them. 114 pages.

Teaching and Rebellion at Union Springs — $.50

A young teacher, tired of political hassles at her ghetto school, takes a job in a small industrial town to "get away from it all." She soon discovers that even Wonder Bread Children don't like school or their prospects after graduation. Though trying to be non-political, she soon discovers that playing rock music in class and listening to students' concerns are political enough to get her fired. Her account is valuable for both students and teachers.

Schoolstopper's Textbook — $.35, or 5 for $1.00

Eighty-seven ways to send your principal to the funny-farm. Some of the most imaginative tactics ever discovered by day-dreaming students are collected in this volume. Hundreds of testimonials have been received from satisfied organizers.

Please add $.50 for postage and handling on each order under $5.

Note: Our prices are guides. If you are young or on a limited income, send what you can; if you are employed, we hope you can send a little extra. Prices are subject to change.

Discounts are available on bulk orders. Write for details.

Make checks payable to **Youth Liberation**, 2007 Washtenaw Ave., Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104 (313) 995-4575.

Student and Youth Organizing

Student and Youth Organizing ought to get into the hands of every high school student, organizer and teacher in the nation. From the grass roots basics (choosing strategies and deciding goals) to the complex intricacies of press relations and fund-raising, this is the kind of handbook which turns ideas into actions — and actions into concrete power.

Education in an unjust social order is not neutral. It is always for domestication or for liberation. This handbook is a blow for liberation. I hope it wins the widest possible appeal.

• **Jonathon Kozol**, author of The Night is Dark and I am Far From Home

This pamphlet is the best training manual we've seen for training democratic citizens, and it is a joy to read.

• **Beatrice and Ronald Gross**, editors of The Children's Rights Movement

Student and Youth Organizing should be immensely valuable as a source of practical suggestions for young people who are trying to get a little more liberty on a sounder legal basis, but who lack the necessary political expertise. The pamphlet is very clear, quite comprehensive, and totally reasonable in its approach. It should be especially useful at a time when American society appears to be opening up a little.

• **Edgar Z. Friedenberg**, Professor of Education at Dalhousie University, and author of Coming of Age in America

This pamphlet covers everything, and should be seen by every high school radical. I wish I had known of it when I was first organizing.

• **Kent Worcester**, high school student

Student and Youth Organizing is a highly valuable tool for students, whether they are working for immediate changes or for the long term goals of getting a real voice for students in the educational system. It is a sound, sensible and well thought out manual. There is obviously a host of hard-won experience behind it.

• **Mary Lee Bundy**, co-editor of the National Children's Directory

Drawing on the successes and failures of high school student activists over the past decade, this booklet poses the question: What can students do to change their schools? It is an insightful, practical and comprehensive organizers' resource book for students who want more democracy, equality, respect and education from their school.

Some years ago Vietnamese General Giap's handbook on guerilla warfare was assigned reading for the Pentagon's top brass. High school principals may soon be studying **Student and Youth Organizing**.

• **Samuel Bowles**, author of Schooling in Capitalist America

At a time when people's rights are violated and threatened as a matter of course, **Student and Youth Organizing** contains the strategies to protect and extend human rights. It is a practical and useful resource for social studies and civics classes.

• **Stephen Williams**, social studies teacher, Plymouth Salem High School, Plymouth, Mich.

... an excellent introduction to effective tactics and strategies for protection of student rights and influencing local school administrators and school boards. If this handbook were used in high school social studies courses, it could be an important means of training future democratic citizens.

• **Joel Spring**, author of Education and the Rise of the Corporate State